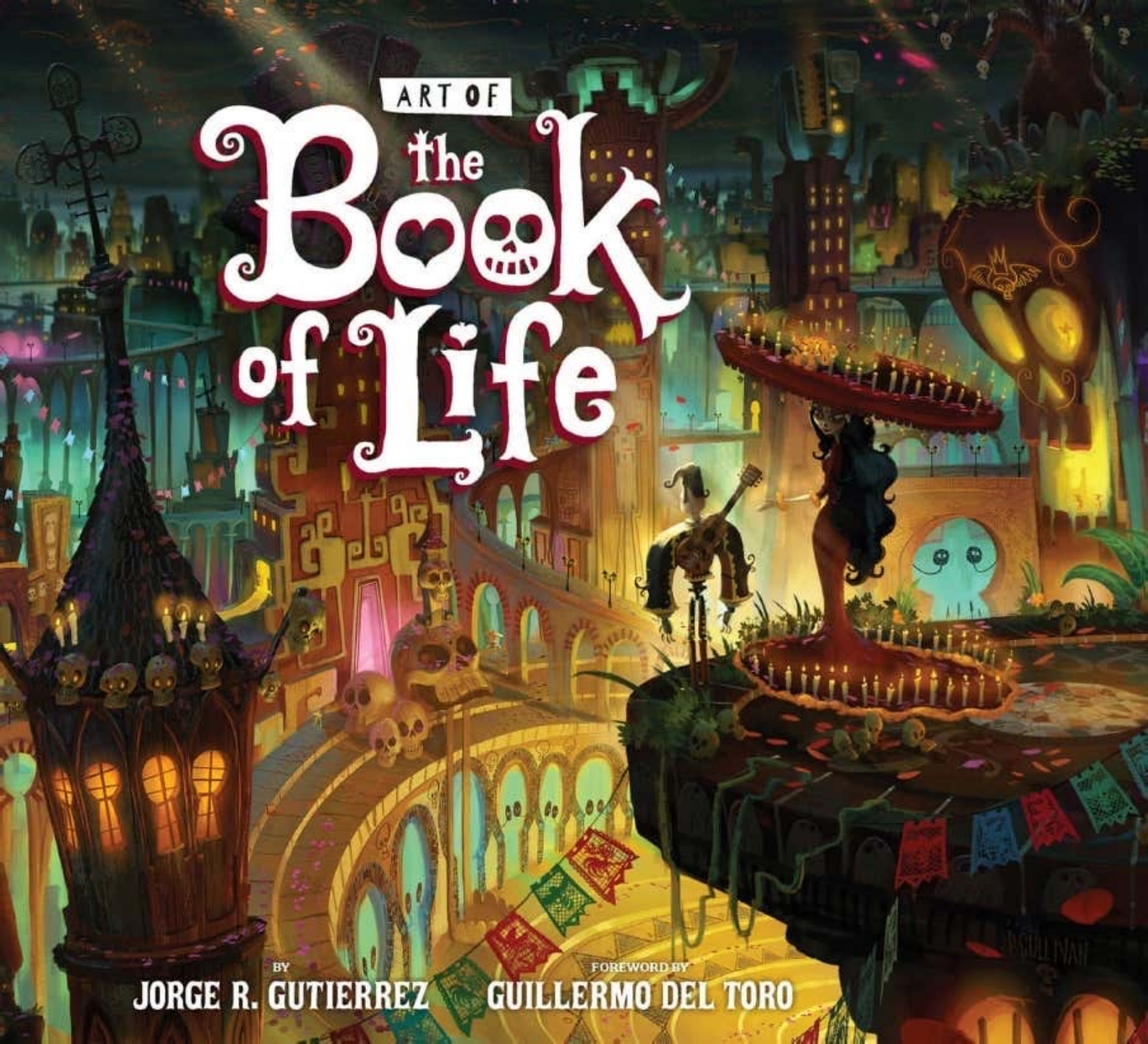
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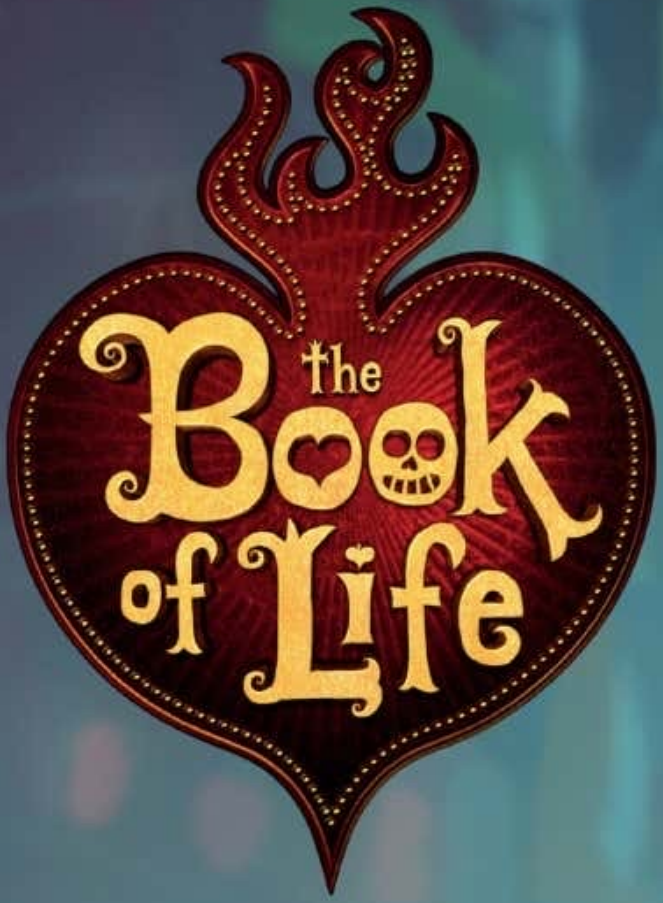
BY
JORGE R. GUTIERREZ
FOREWORD BY
GUILLERMO DEL TORO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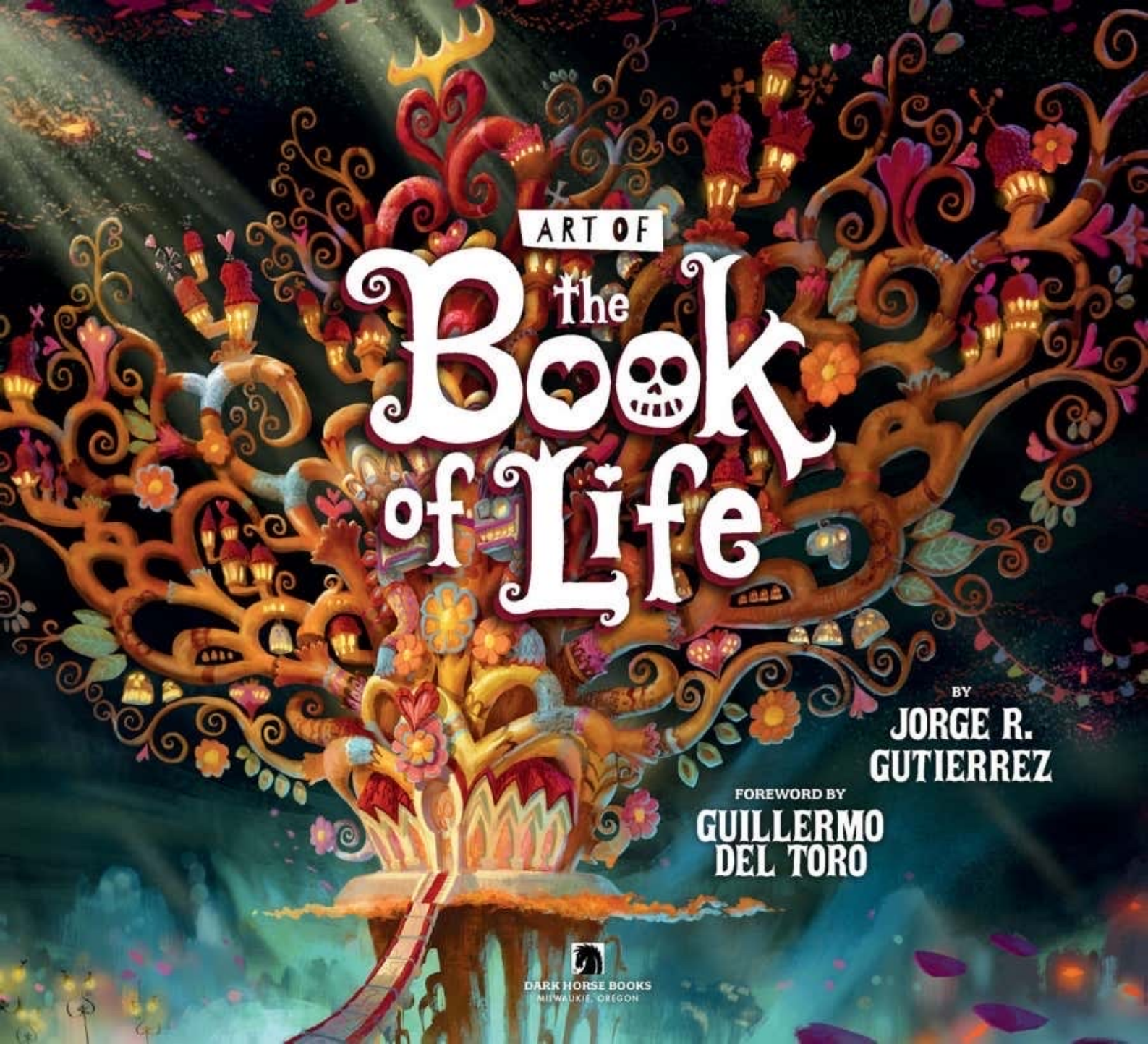

BY
JORGE R. GUTIERREZ

FOREWORD BY
GUILLERMO DEL TORO

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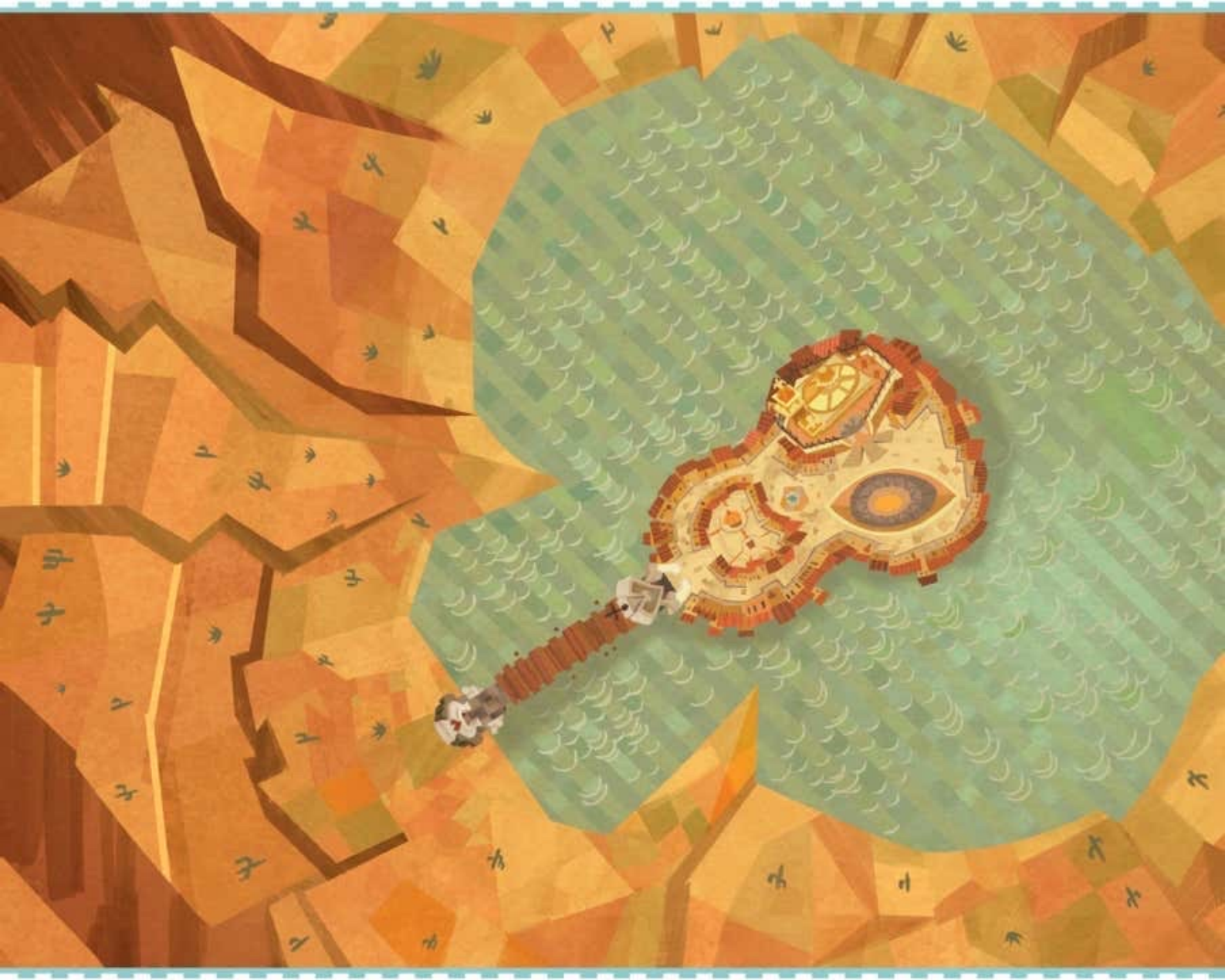


2-D San Ángel by Paul Sullivan and Roman Laney *(above)*, Guillermo del Toro by Jorge R. Gutierrez *(opposite)*

FOREWORD

by GUILLERMO DEL TORO

A FEW YEARS AGO a very large, smiling man showed up on my doorstep with a handful of gorgeous maquettes and boxes full of exquisite preproduction art. This man was Jorge Gutierrez, and his enthusiasm was so overwhelming that I embarked on a mad excursion to fulfill his vision of an animated film about Love, Life, and Redemption: *The Book of Life*.

From day one, I worked closely with Jorge and his team, rearranging story elements, recruiting a stellar voice cast, choosing a cinematographer, assembling a musical team (the brilliant Gustavo Santaolalla and the magnificent Paul Williams), and finding a studio that would support his dream. I have followed Jorge through this journey, and his faith and his energy have always remained constant—he is a true leader; he is the real deal.

Let me tell you a little secret: That afternoon when we first met, well, I was already a fan of his work. My daughters and I loved his animated series *El Tigre* and were delighted with his animated vignettes on *Mad*.

Jorge is my favorite kind of filmmaker—the guy who permeates every single aspect of his work with his ideas, his vision, and his hard work but, like any good leader, allows everyone to feel like a vital contributor to the tale. When I suggested that we utilize the basic myth of Orpheus and Eurydice, Jorge immediately started to riff on how we could execute it so it felt like a Mexican legend—a fairy tale passed from generation to generation. In a matter of minutes, he had retooled the ideas and made them belong with the whole as if they'd always been there . . . This film is all Jorge; he lives and breathes every frame of this story.

He connects profoundly with my Mexican soul. He has a deep sense of belonging. His roots go deeply into Mexican culture, and his sense of family, and love, and life are both exuberant and touching.

Browse through the art in this book and you will find a crew in love with their work, inspired by the world that Jorge has presented to us . . . the very world that was there, in one way or another, that fateful afternoon when he showed up at my doorstep and snatched me away into this strange, familiar land.

GUILLERMO DEL TORO
Thousand Oaks, CA, May 2014

The world by Simon Varela and Paul Sullivan

INTRODUCTION

by JORGE R. GUTIERREZ

BEHOLD, AMIGOS! You hold in your hands the legendary Book of Life!

Well, technically . . . it's the book about the art of The Book of Life, but as my mischievous grandfather used to say, "Jorgito, never let the truth get in the way of a good story."

Ever since I was a young, burly, mustachioed kid, I have always loved "art of" books. I would drool over every piece of concept art and character design, trying to imagine what these magical films would eventually look like. And imagine I did! But then my little heart would break after seeing that most films looked nothing or very little like the art in the books. It got so bad that sometimes I would buy the "art of" book, and if the trailer didn't look like the art, I would just skip the film. Yes, I was that little burly, mustachioed kid.

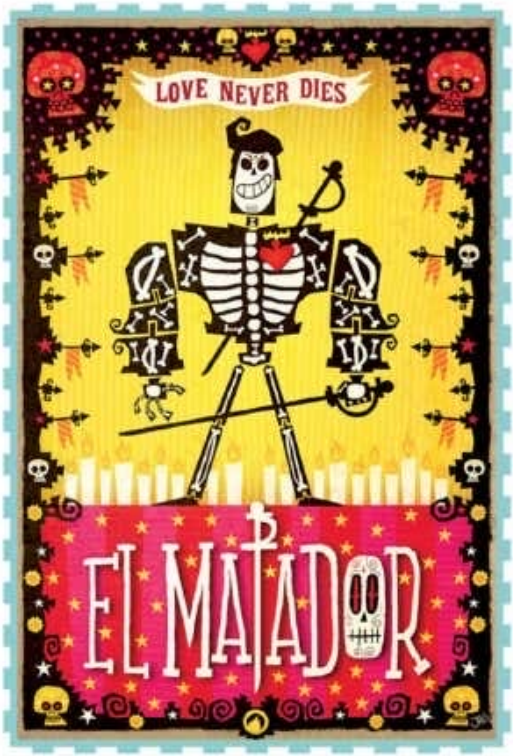
And now, I swear by the blood of my ancestors, this film AND this book are one! THIS I SWEAR! In fact, it was my intention from the start to have our beloved film look exactly like the art in these pages. And, as you can imagine, every amazing artist in our crew, geniuses from all over the world, believed in this idea, and we all unconditionally poured our hearts and souls into the art in your hands. And a little spicy salsa.

So, what inspired The Book of Life? The unique look of the film is very much my passionate love letter to Mexican folk art. The reason I admire and adore folk art so much is simple: it's art by the people, for the people, and about the people. It's accessible to all ages and social classes. And more than anything, it's a handcrafted reflection of who we really are. This art can be funny, sad, majestic, or humble. It can be in museums or in your house. It's for everyone, everywhere. And all the beautiful imperfections are there to reflect the presence of the artisan's hands. That's where the soul of our film comes from: the people who made it. It's a little slice of their souls. And it's all for you, you lucky reader!

And then, there are the various artists from the past and the present that inspired me: Sergio Aragonés, Miguel Covarrubias, Picasso, Dalí, Goya, Gaudí, Diego Rivera, Frida Kahlo, Siqueiros, Gabriel Figueroa, El Indio Fernández, Pedro Infante, María Félix, Cantinflas, Sergio Leone, Tonino Delli Colli, Mary Blair, Jim Flora, Jules Engel, Maurice Noble, and of course, our amazing producer and my "tough love" mentor, Guillermo del Toro.

Guillermo has not only been a loving mentor throughout production but has also become a creative collaborator and a trusted friend. We could not have made this film without his unconditional love and spectacular support. I have always been a fan of his films but I have now become an even bigger fan of the man himself. So, yes, he has been a huge inspiration.

More inspiration came from a ton of influences, like lucha libre, mustaches, Tijuana street taco stands, classic Mexican cinema, 2-D fighting video games, bullfighting posters, spaghetti westerns, Spanish comics, Mexican telenovelas, anime, my grandma's cooking, and all the tall tales I heard about my family from my parents and my grandfather, Luis. All this was thrown into the giant pot of spicy and delicious mole that is the art of The Book of Life.



And of course, there is the Day of the Dead, a.k.a. El Día de los Muertos, perhaps my biggest inspiration for the film. As my parents will tell you, I have been drawing, painting, and writing about this tradition for as long as I can remember. It's something that's been a part of me since I was little. Perhaps it's because the core belief of the holiday is so poetic and simple: as long as we remember those who have passed away, as long as we tell their stories, sing their songs, tell their jokes, cook their favorite dishes, THEN they are with us, around us, and in our hearts. The moment we forget them, the moment we stop saying their names and singing their songs, then they are truly gone. They no longer exist. I love this idea, and it has kept those who have left sooner than expected close to me. The aesthetic of the Day of the Dead is magnificent, but the idea underneath is even more spectacular. It's the type of belief that is completely universal and makes the world better.

I never set out to make a film about the origins of the Day of the Dead. My plan was to have it be the canvas upon which we painted our story. My wish was to honor the holiday in a playful and respectful manner. A beautiful and kind gift from Mexico to the whole world. I believe, from the bottom of my mustachioed heart, that we have done that. I just hope the whole world is ready for this spicy dish!

And how much does this day mean to me? Well . . . I proposed to Sandra Equihua, my wife and muse, on that very day. Not only that, but we got married on that day too (and it was the first time that EVER happened in Tijuana)! And what made that day even more special was that every member of our families and every one of our friends—both the living and the remembered—was there with us. I could feel every single one of them cheering us on. It was the best night of my life.

So yes, what you have before you is more than an "art of" book. It's a spectacular collection of art inspired by very personal stories.

El Matador poster by Jorge R. Gutierrez *[opposite]*. Above are snippets from my little CalArts thesis film, *Carmelo* (2000). You can see I've been inspired by the vibrant world and themes of *el Día de los Muertos* for a very long time!

A table full of delicious dishes, each one cooked from the heart just for you. Each one a window into the soul of each unique, quirky, and lovable artist. Just let it wash over you.

Seriously, the art here is a testament to what a small team of artists and digital artisans in the middle of Texas were able to create by banding together. Yeah, small team, but giant hearts. No retreat, no surrender, y'all. Our mantra at Reel FX was and is "PAIN IS TEMPORARY, FILM IS FOREVER." And the book in your hands—*The Art of The Book of Life*—this is our baby. The delivery was really hard, but it's here, and it's beautiful. And it has a glorious mustache! And yes, it punched the doctor in the face when he tried to slap it.

Now go enjoy the spicy art in this book. We made it just for you and all the little mustachioed kids all over the world.

We are the Book of Life.

XIBALBA

CANDLE MAKER

LA MUERTE

CHAPTER ONE

CHARACTERS

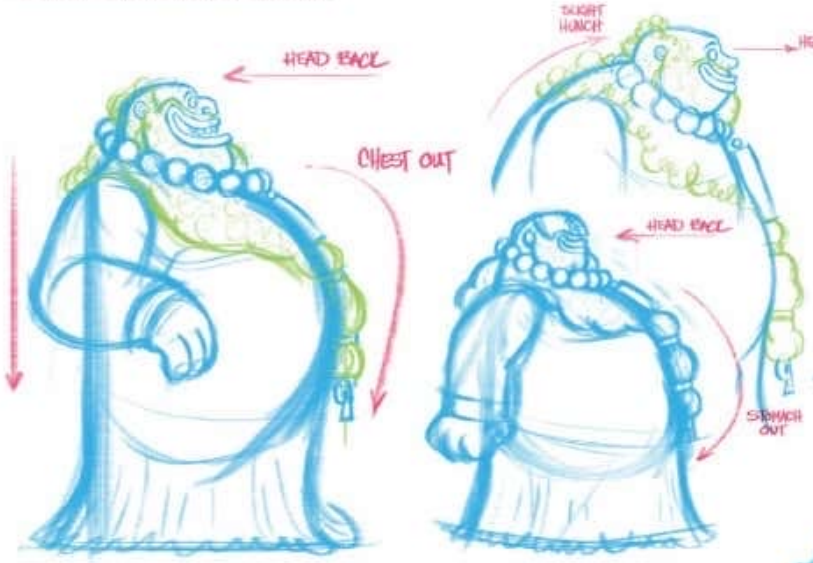
OF THE BOOK OF LIFE

Candle Maker character design by Jorge R. Gutierrez, paint by Paul Sullivan

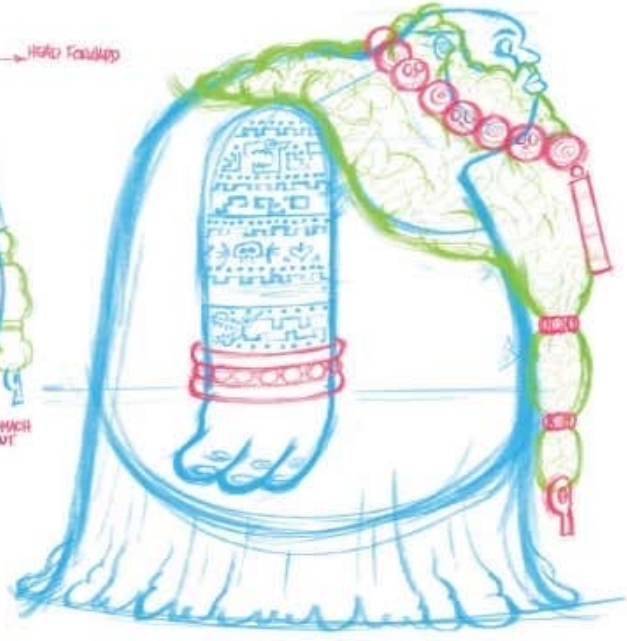
Candle Maker first sketch by Jorge R. Gutierrez

CANDLE MAKER

This funny, ancient god, along with his best pal, the Book of Life, is the keeper of the Cave of Souls. He's made out of wax and has a beard of clouds and a belly full of light and wisdom. He was the last major character I wrote and designed for the film.



Candle Maker was very much inspired by my love of classic rubber-hose animation characters. He has few angles and everything is round to reflect how fun and funny he can be. I also wanted him to look like a "mentor" character from a 2-D fighting video game, mixed with some of my favorite eighties TV show characters. And the reason his skin is yellow? The Simpsons.

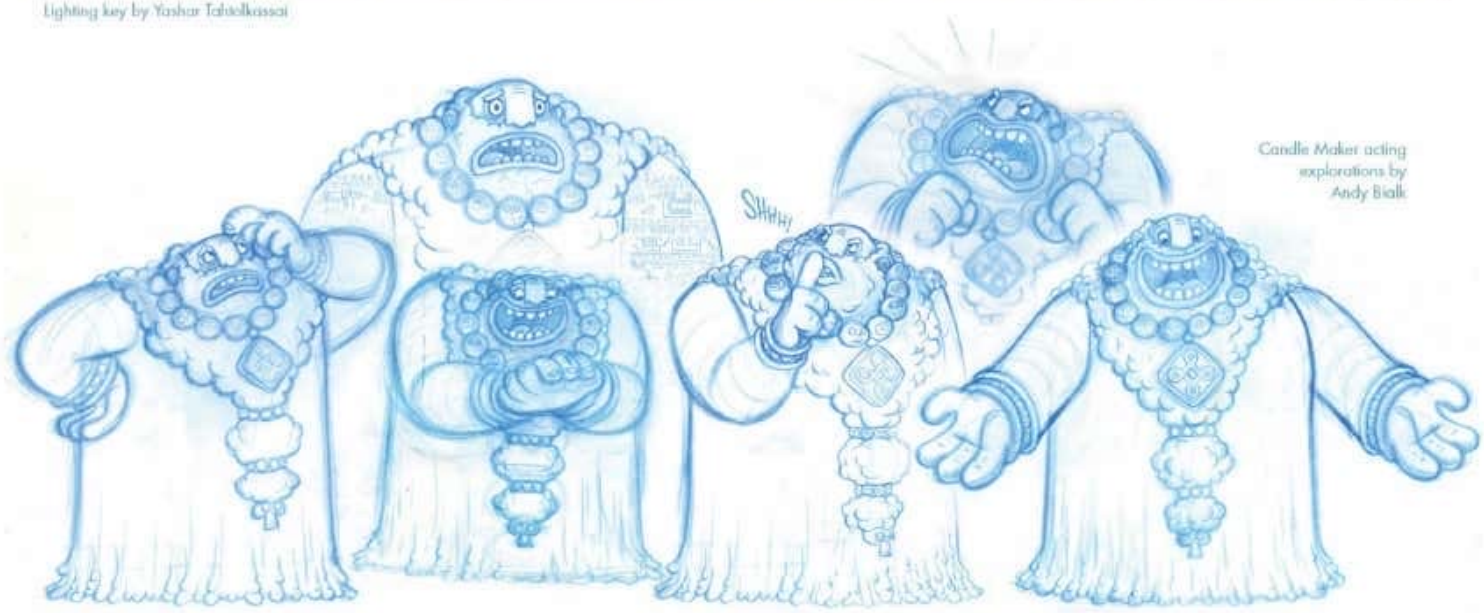


Candle Maker side view explorations by Andy Bialk

His personality changed as the film evolved, and we eventually found his soul in the writing and voice performance.

Candle Maker acting explorations by Tom Caulfield

Lighting key by Yashar Tahsildkassai



Candle Maker acting explorations by Andy Bialk

Candle Maker face acting explorations by Tom Caufield

Candle Maker painting by Robin Joseph. All the symbols in his stone jewelry and tattoo carvings are meant to symbolize infinity (the swirls and the endless square on his chest), eternal love (the flaming and winged hearts everywhere), and the Land of the Remembered (the skulls).

Candle Maker turnaround by Jorge R. Gutierrez and Andy Bialk. As far as his overall shape, I really wanted him to feel like a giant bell, foreshadowing how important that shape would be in our story.

And here he is in all his final glory!
Behold the Candle Maker!

THE BOOK OF LIFE

This magical book contains every story ever told in the history of time. *The Book of Life* is not only the title of our film but a really important character in our story as well. The book is fascinated with, and constantly surprised by, the actions of mankind.

Book letter designs by Paul Sullivan. I really wanted the book to feel special but not specific to any part of the world. The most important symbol is the heart created by little hearts.

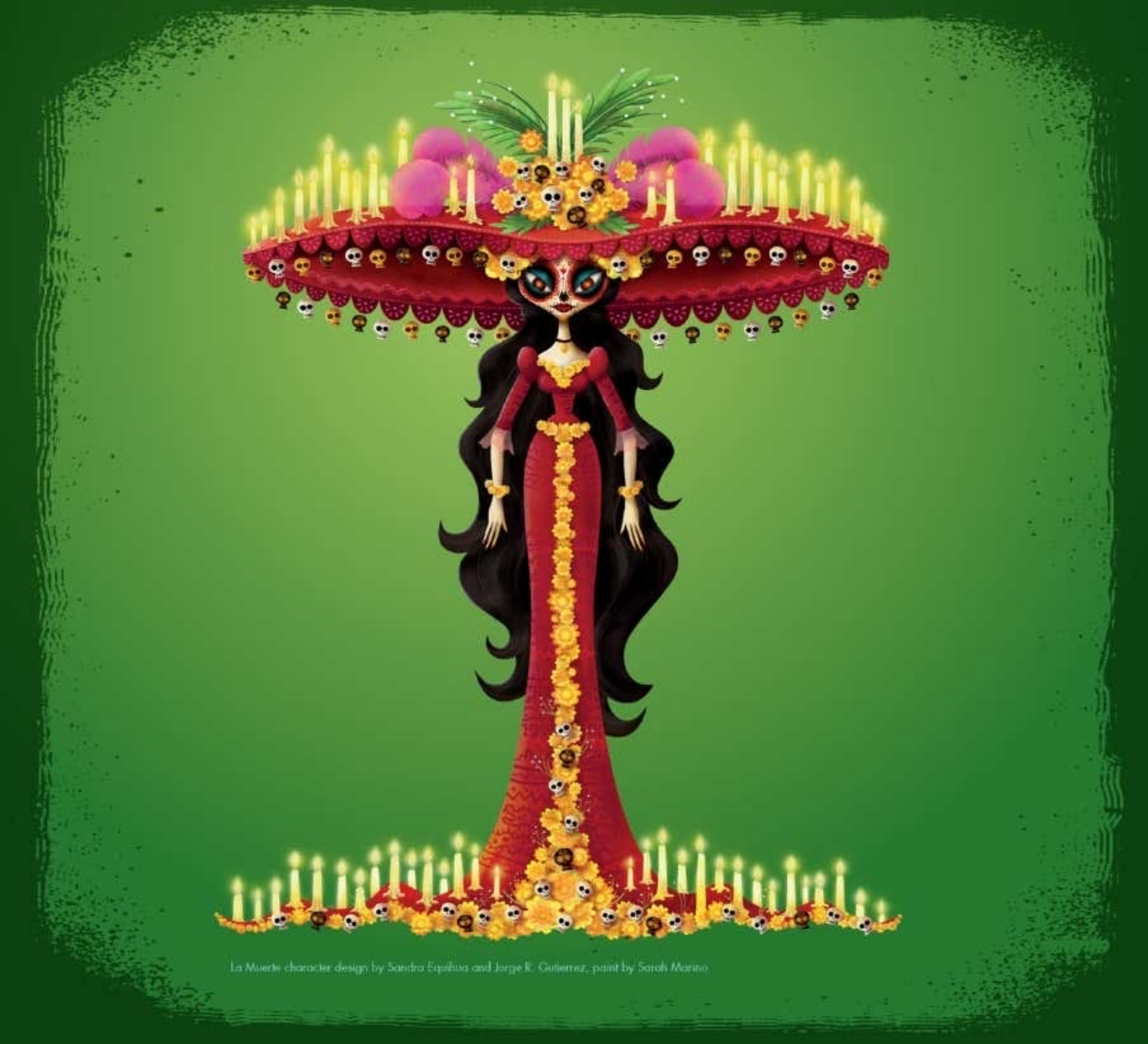
Book of Life paint by Sarah Marino

SPINE

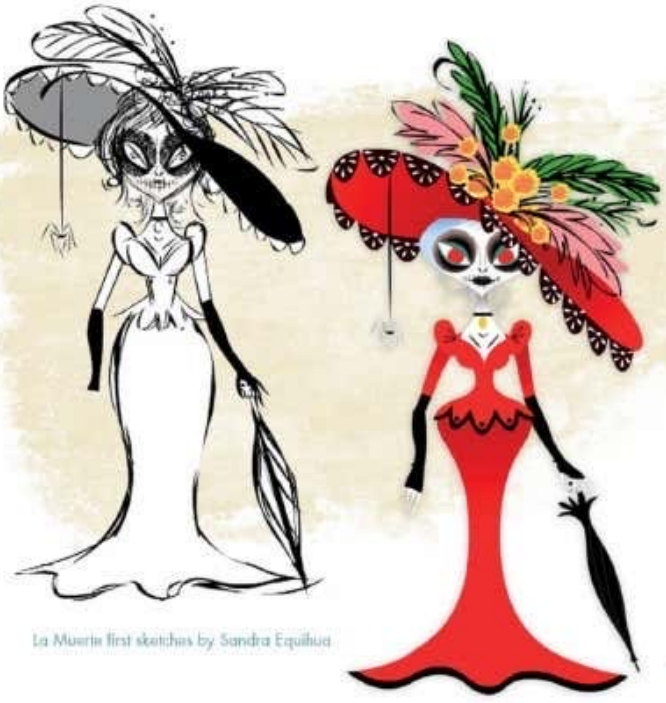
Book of Life design by Sandra Equihua and Jorge R. Gutierrez

Illustration by
Paul Sullivan

Story beat painting by Paul Sullivan



La Muerte character design by Sandra Equihua and Jorge R. Gutierrez, paint by Sarah Marino



La Muerte first sketches by Sandra Equihua

La Muerte first sketch
by Jorge R. Gutierrez

LA MUERTE

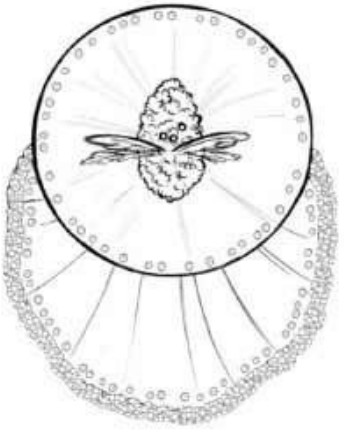
This loving, ancient goddess is the kind ruler of the Land of the Remembered. Covered with candles, flowers, and decorations, she's made out of sweet sugar candy with black licorice hair! She loves mankind and has all the faith in the world in us. Her dress is red because it represents love, passion, and life. The only blue in her design is in her eyes, because she only has eyes for Xibalba.

La Muerte was, by far, the hardest character to design in the whole film! Here are just some of the many tries.

La Muerte sketch by Sandra Equihua

La Muerte acting explorations by Tom Caufield

La Muerte character design by Sandra Equihua and Jorge R. Gutierrez. We almost went with this idea but she felt too short and not majestic enough. We eventually made her lower body much longer and stretched her whole shape to feel more unique. And we made the hat huge!



La Muerte turnaround by Sandra Equihua, Paul Sullivan, Alison Donato, and Sylvain Deboissy

La Muerte painting by Paul Sullivan

Lighting key by Yashar Tahtelkassai

Some of the challenges were her ridiculously huge hat and the fact that she had no legs under her wedding-dress-style skirt. But as one can see in the film, these limitations made her movements more unique and supernatural. Well done, animation team!

La Muerte acting exploration by Paul Sullivan

La Muerte acting explorations by Sylvain Deboissy

La Muerte painting by Shane Richardson

La Muerte sculpt by Simon Varela, Oscar Cornejo, Mauricio Fuentes, and Ulises Martinez. Simon and his team of artists in El Salvador took our original flat design and created this amazing sculpt to guide the modeling and surface team.

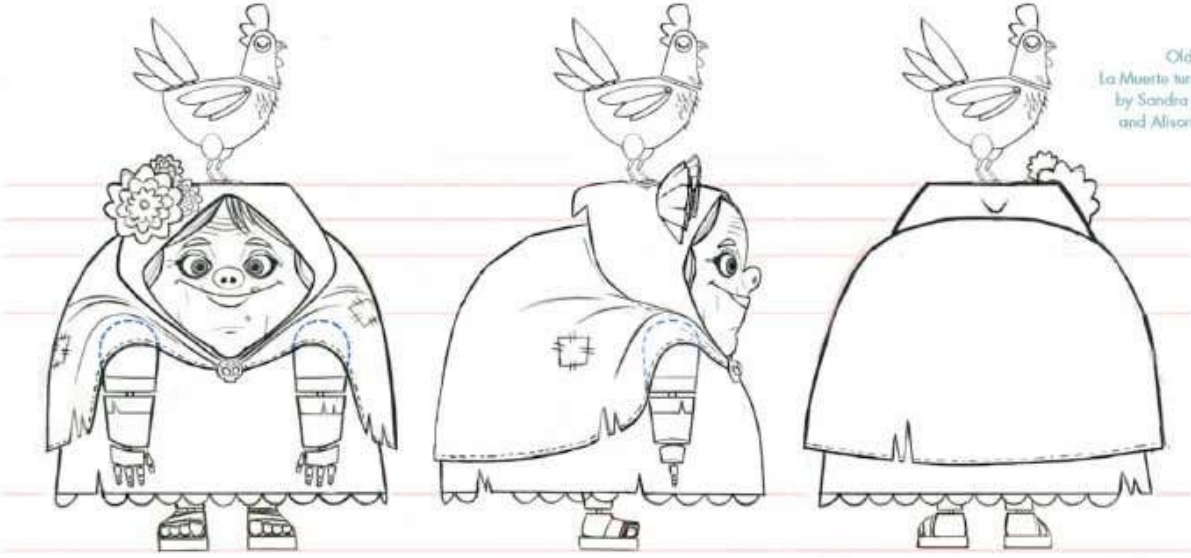
SURPRISED **HAPPY** **ANGRY** **SAD**

La Muerte face paint acting explorations by Sandra Equihua. To have Sandra and me pouring our hearts and souls into such a personally meaningful and culturally overwhelming design really brought us together as artists and collaborators.

And here is the final model! We could not be prouder of her. La Muerte was also very much inspired by both the iconic print *La Calavera Catrina* by José Guadalupe Posada and Diego Rivera's portrayal of her in his mural *Sueño de una tarde dominical en la Alameda Central*. As Mexican artists, Sandra and I hope we have added another honorable version of this beloved Mexican cultural icon. We both believe her to be completely unforgettable.

Old woman La Muerte character design by Sandra Equihua, paint by Alison Donato

Old woman La Muerte original sketches by Sandra Equihua. La Muerte's human disguise is an innocent beggar woman. She was always designed to look full of life. She has a bit of a pig nose and a chicken on her head to symbolize how much she loves animals and vice versa.



Old woman La Muerte turnaround by Sandra Equihua and Alison Donato

Xibalba original character design by Jorge R. Gutierrez

Xibalba first sketches by Jorge R. Gutierrez

XIBALBA

This mischievous ancient god is the rascally ruler of the Land of the Forgotten. I'm not sure Guillermo del Toro ever knew, but this design is my love letter to his films. I did the first sketch of Xibalba after we had a script meeting. Xibalba is made out of tar (which stains you for life) and everything icky in the world. As opposed to La Muerte, Xibalba thinks mankind is not pure of heart, just like himself. His flames burn green with envy. The only red in his design is in his skull-shaped irises, because he only has eyes for La Muerte.

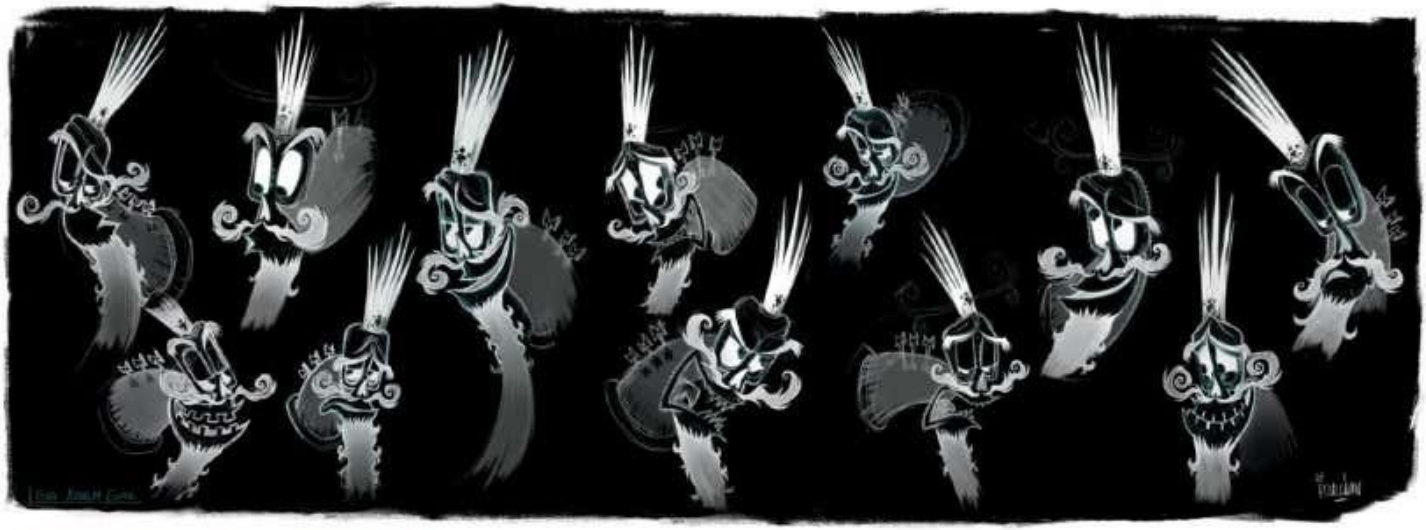
Xibalba sketch by Paul Sullivan

Xibalba wing design by Paul Sullivan

Xibalba turnaround by Jorge R. Gutierrez and Andy Bialk

In order to make him feel younger, we decided to trim his long white beard. The new mustache-to-beard relationship became more of a scorpion shape, which I think reflects his personality even better.

Xibalba painting by Paul Sullivan



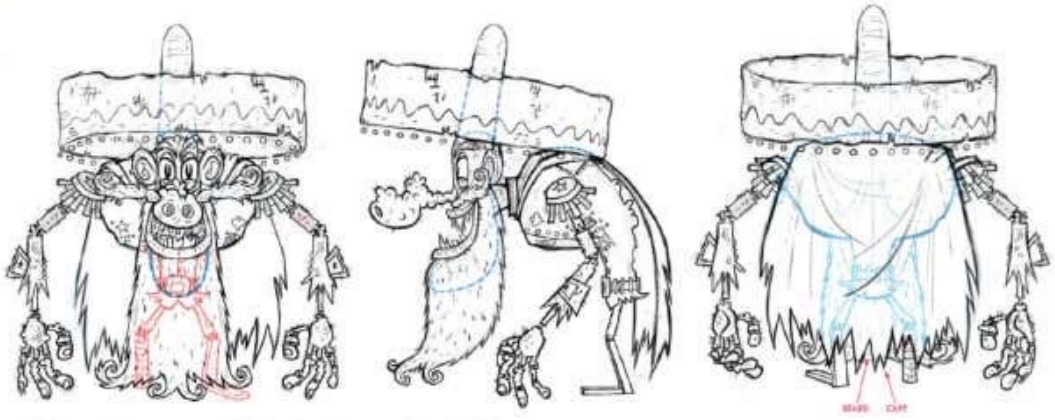
Xibalba expression exploration sketches by Paul Sullivan. Another thing I really wanted us to push with his face was the idea of having pointed teeth for when he was angry or evil and square teeth for when he was being more honest. And then no teeth and slick, curved mouth lines for when he was being charming, which was most of the time.

Color key sketch by Bryan Lashelle. As this image clearly shows, La Muerte and Xibalba were designed to work with each other, even though they are not meant to at first glance. They are symbols of the natural complications of true love.

Ta-da! The final model. This is one of those crazy, baroque character designs that I always dreamt about, and then I woke up one day and the dream came true! All the details are magnificent. And the way he moves is even more amazing. Again, as with La Muerte, we could not be prouder of how he turned out. It's like someone went inside my head and just brought him out exactly how I saw him as I was writing. Being a lover of films, I'm a huge fan of iconic villains.

The Medal of Everlasting Life by Jorge R. Gutierrez. The medal design is full of symbolism: a black heart, with a green flame of envy and the colors of Xibalba. It had to look cool enough that any kid in San Ángel would want it. But it also had to look like it could hurt you just for touching it.

Xibalba masquerades as an old military man when he's in the Land of the Living. I drew this character design at the first script meeting with Guillermo del Toro. Again, it's a love letter to the old black-and-white Fleischer cartoon villains of the thirties. And check out his crazy mustache!



Old man Xibalba turnaround by Jorge R. Gutierrez and Andy Bialk

Old man Xibalba original first sketch by Jorge R. Gutierrez *(left)*, acting exploration by Andy Bialk *(center)*, paint by Sarah Marino *(right)*

Chakal original sketch by Jorge R. Gutierrez. This was the very first sketch of Chakal, which I drew in pieces and edited together. I always wanted his shape to be that of a monster.

Chakal sculpt by Simon Varela, Oscar Cornejo, Rafael Moran, and Vladimir Calderon

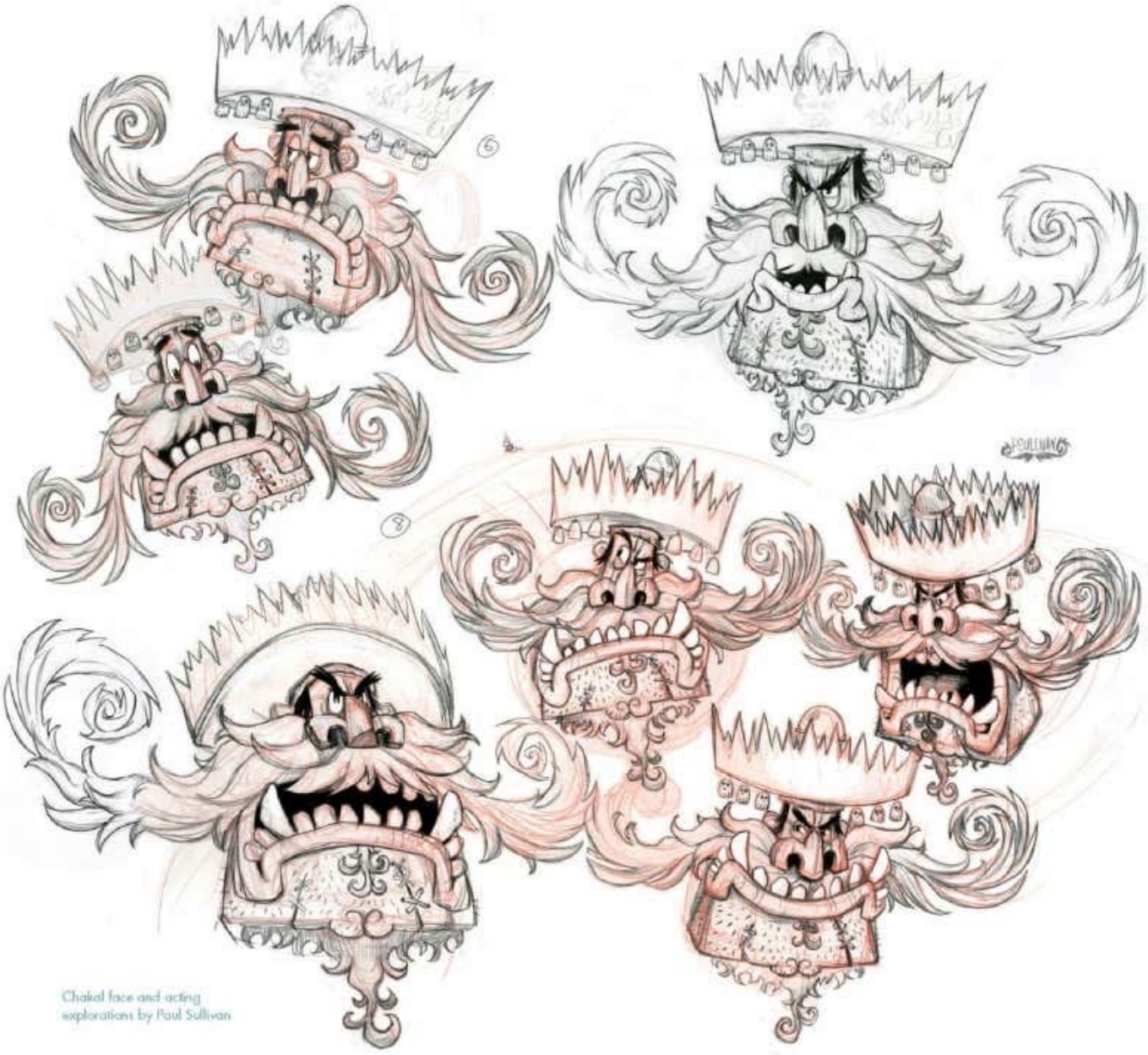
Chakal sketch by Paul Sullivan

CHAKAL & BANDIDOS

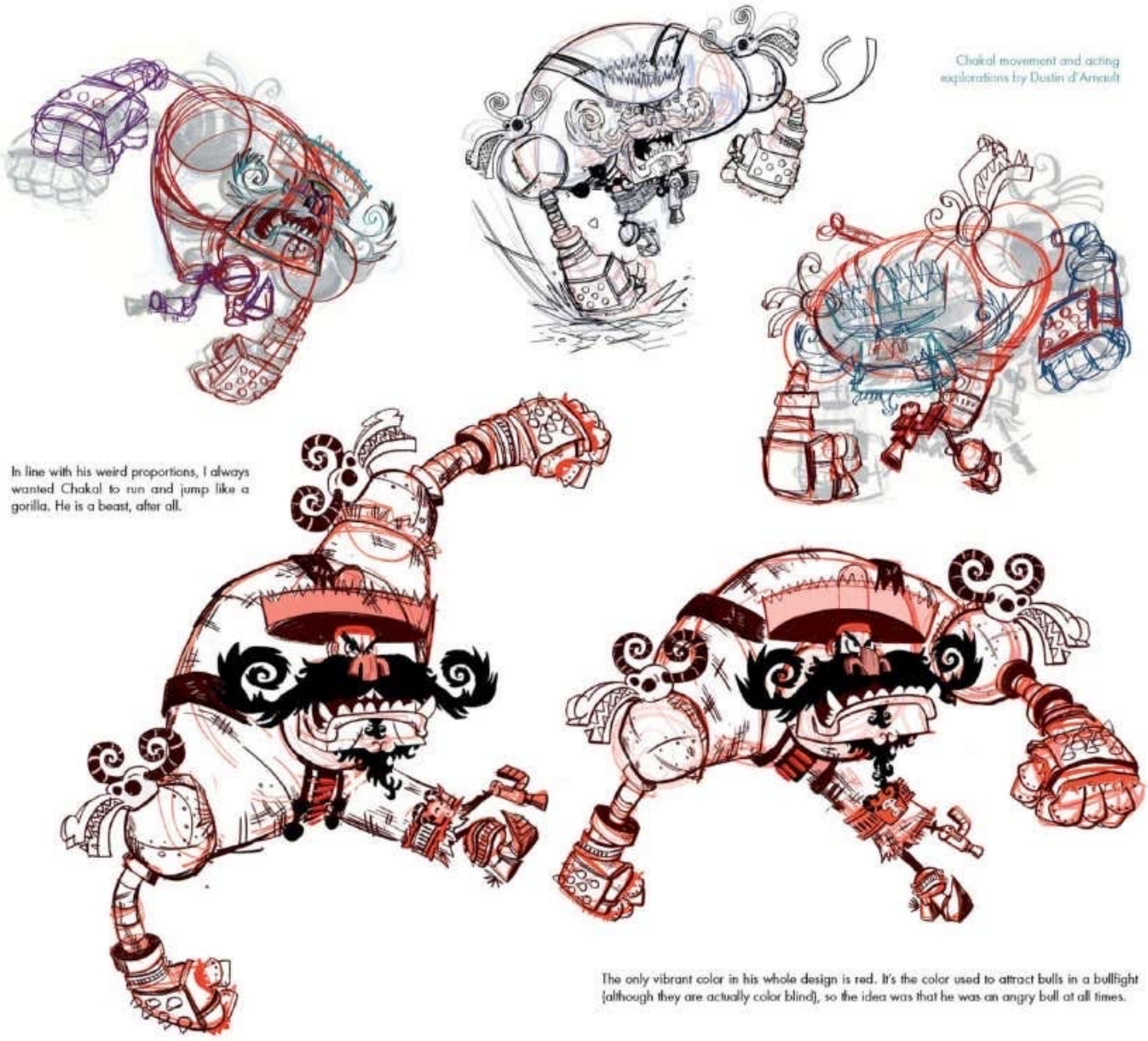
A beast of a man, rumored to have been raised by rabid wolves, and a symbol of machismo gone bad, Chakal is my love letter to all my favorite Mexican-bandit villains in all the Sergio Leone spaghetti westerns. Just as all the good human characters are made out of wood, the *bandidos* are all covered in rusty and sharp metal. They don't need guns; they are the weapons themselves!

Chakal original character design and paint by Jorge R. Gutierrez

Chakal head paint by Paul Sullivan



Chakal face and acting explorations by Paul Sullivan



Chakal movement and acting explorations by Dustin d'Arnault

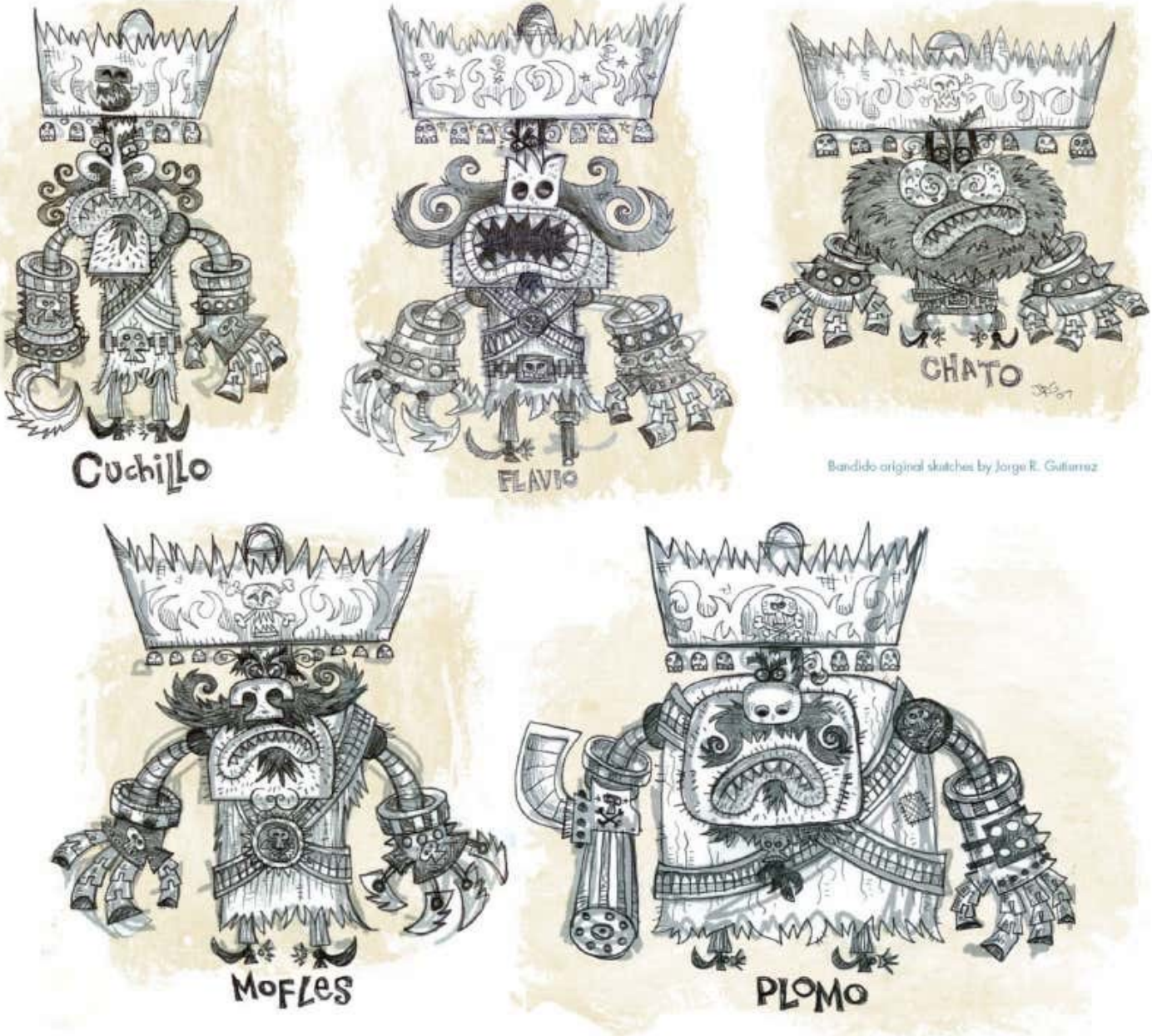
In line with his weird proportions, I always wanted Chakal to run and jump like a gorilla. He is a beast, after all.

The only vibrant color in his whole design is red. It's the color used to attract bulls in a bullfight (although they are actually color blind), so the idea was that he was an angry bull at all times.

Chakal painting by Paul Sullivan

Characters by Jorge R. Gutierrez, background by Roman Lanev *(top)*, design by Clayton Stillwell, paint by Yashar Tahsildarzai *(bottom)*

The final model of Chakal! His arms are able to expand and retract for the final showdown, and his fingers are made out of chopped-up metal. And he has the most impressive mustache in a film full of amazing mustaches.



Bandido original sketches by Jorge R. Gutierrez

I remember sketching these guys while in Tijuana. They were colored to feel dirty and stinky.

Bandido lighting key by Yashar Tahtolkassai

Bandido paints by Jorge R. Gutierrez and Sarah Marino

I designed Joaquin to look like a classic superhero and an American football star. He's like a living trophy, covered in medals, with an awesome mustache. He's Captain Latin America!

Joaquin original design by Jorge R. Gutierrez

Joaquin initial design by Jorge R. Gutierrez

Joaquin initial face design
by Jorge R. Gutierrez

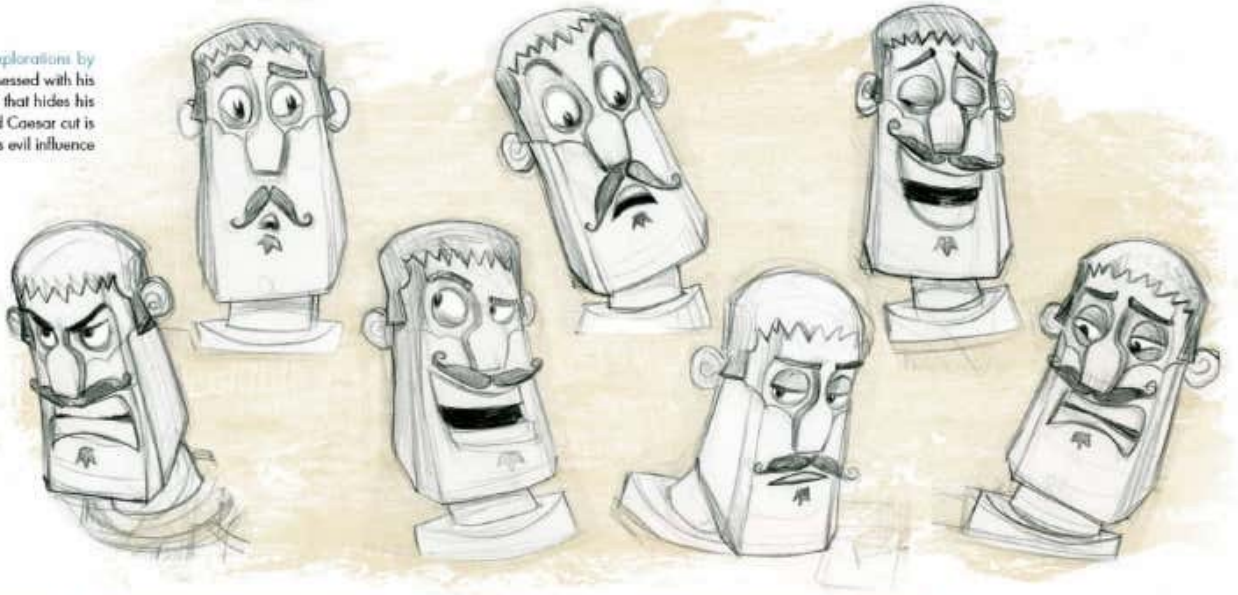
Joaquin acting explorations by
Andy Bialk and Sylvain Deboissy

Joaquin sculpt
by Simon Varela,
Mauricio Fuentes,
and Rafael Moran

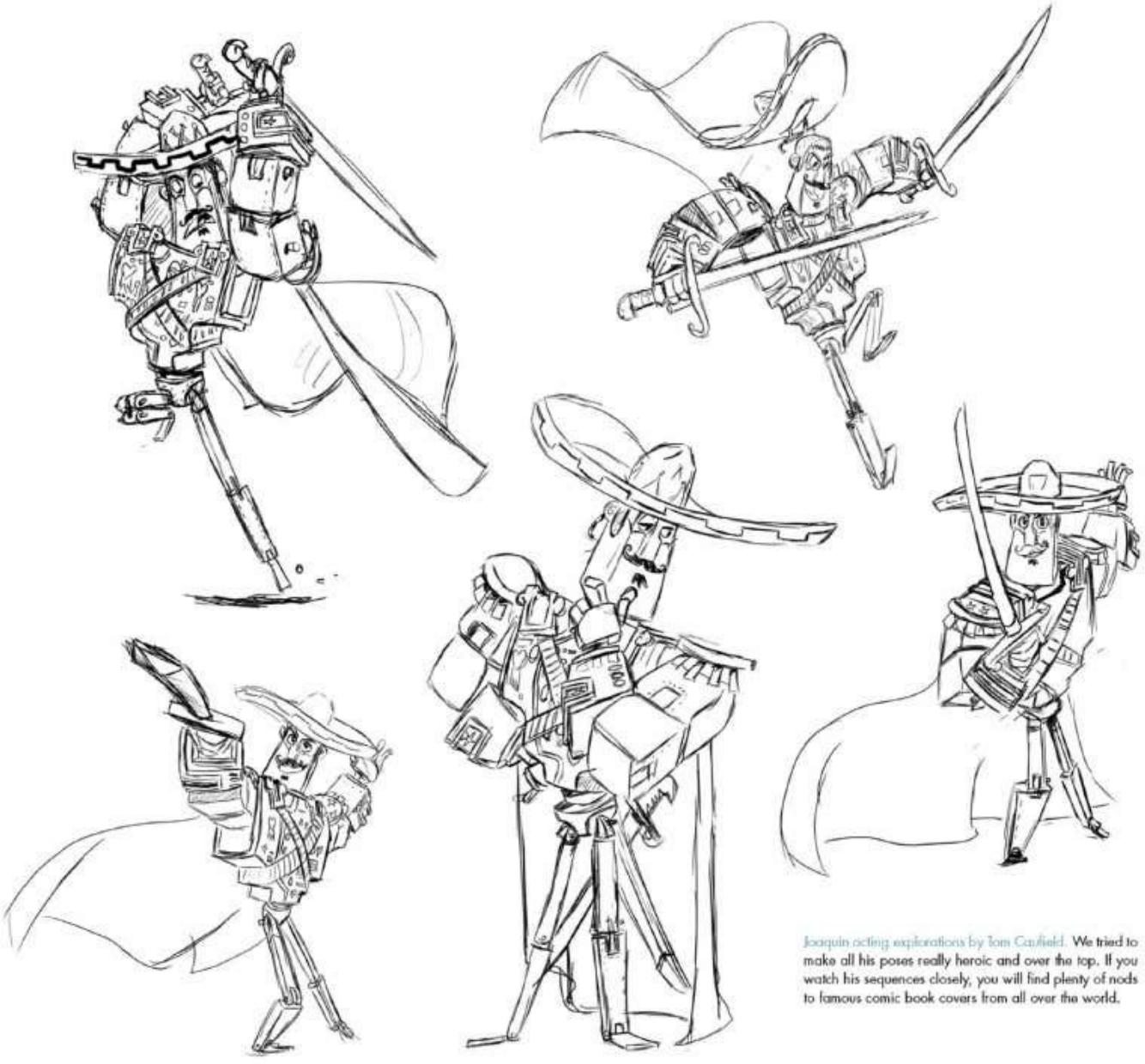
JOAQUIN

The superhero of San Ángel! Women love him, men want to be him! Strong, rich, funny, brave, and super macho, he is the world's most awesome mustached man. Manolo's best friend had to be very likable so that the love triangle with Maria felt balanced.

Joaquin face expression explorations by Paul Sullivan. Joaquin is obsessed with his mustache, which is a mask that hides his insecurities. The little jagged Caesar cut is meant to show that Xibalba's evil influence is taking over his mind.



Lighting key by Travis Koller. One of the most important things about Joaquin's design is his accessories. The big sombrero and bandoleers immediately make him a Mexican revolutionary hero.



Joaquin acting explorations by Tom Caulfield. We tried to make all his poses really heroic and over the top. If you watch his sequences closely, you will find plenty of nods to famous comic book covers from all over the world.

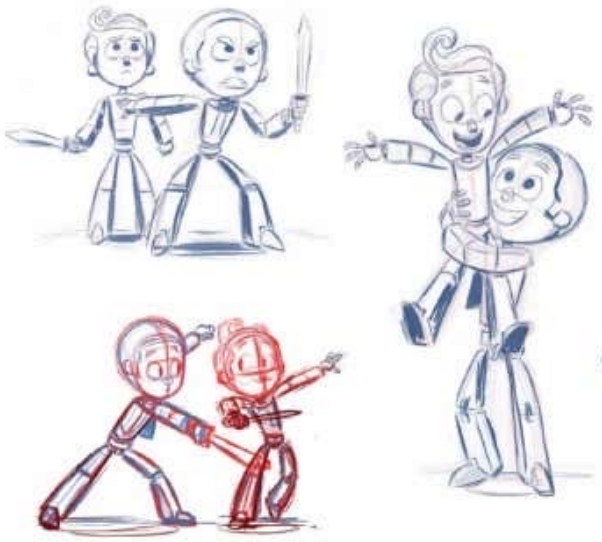
To: Maria
With Love
Joaquin

Joaquin is one of my favorite characters in the film because of his personal arc. In the end he realizes Manolo and Maria belong together. And he learns the most important of lessons: to be a true hero, you must think of others before yourself. Always.

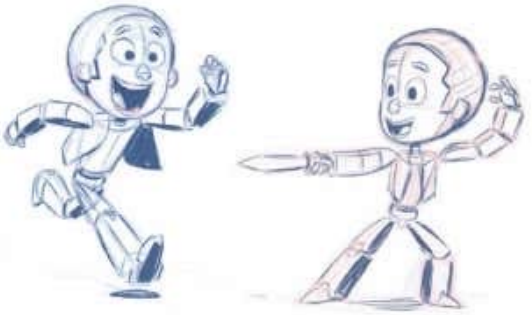
Joaquin, Maria, and Manolo poses by Luis Grane

The final Joaquin model in all his super-macho glory! I LOVE how he turned out. His colors are those of a fairy tale prince, down to the white pants. Blue is his dominant color to symbolize he's a "blue blood." He also wears the colors of the Mexican army of that period, which was very into French fashion, and a sword at each side to symbolize that his destiny has been chosen for him.

Joaquin design by Jorge R. Gutierrez and Sandra Equihua, paint by Sarah Marino



Like in many of my favorite films, we first meet our protagonists as kids. Manolo, Joaquin and Maria as children were reverse engineered from the adult versions. I wanted Joaquin and Manolo to be very similar so as to make it seem like the competition between them would seem fair. All three have little things in their design that foreshadow their future.



Manolo and Joaquin acting explorations by Jesse Aclin

Joaquin lighting key by Travis Koller. Just like the adult version, little Joaquin always wears blue. After meeting with old man Xibalba, he wears a black vest (with red on the inside) that foreshadows his black military-hero cape and helps hide his medal from the town.

Joaquin lighting key by Bryan Lasbelle

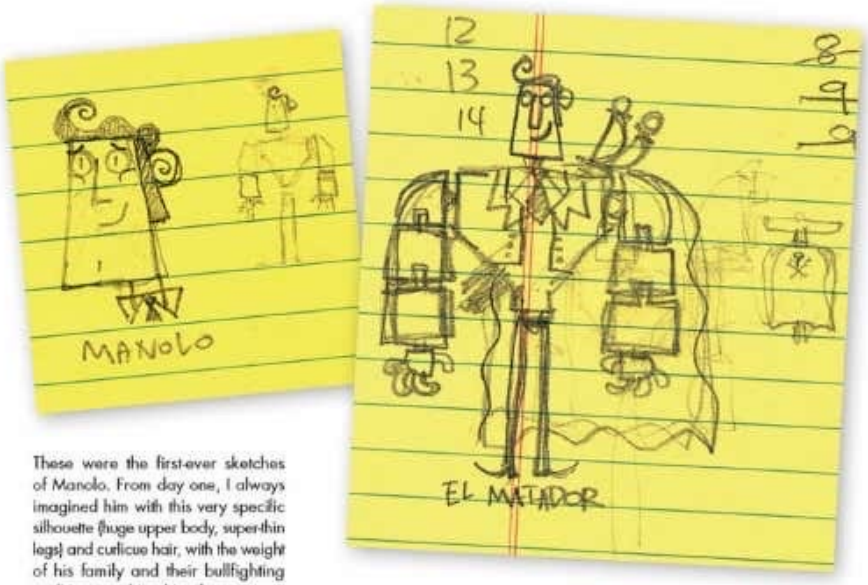
Joaquin acting explorations by Jesse Aclin

Joaquin military outfit design by Sandra Equihua, paint by Sarah Marino

Joaquin acting explorations by Sylvain Deboissy

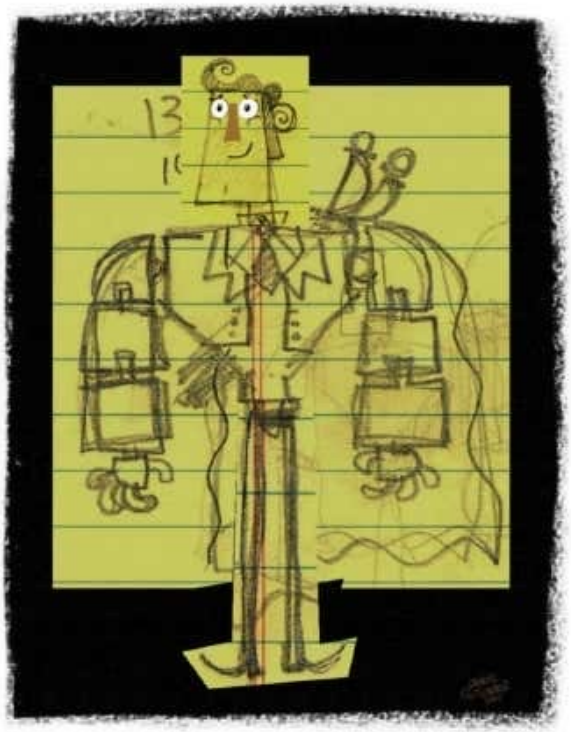
A guitar on one side and bullfighting swords on the other. Each one pointing in a different direction. Eternally conflicted by his love for his family and his love for music and Maria. This is Manolo.

Character design
by Jorge R. Gutierrez



These were the first-ever sketches of Manolo. From day one, I always imagined him with this very specific silhouette (huge upper body, super-thin legs) and curlicue hair, with the weight of his family and their bullfighting traditions crushing him down.

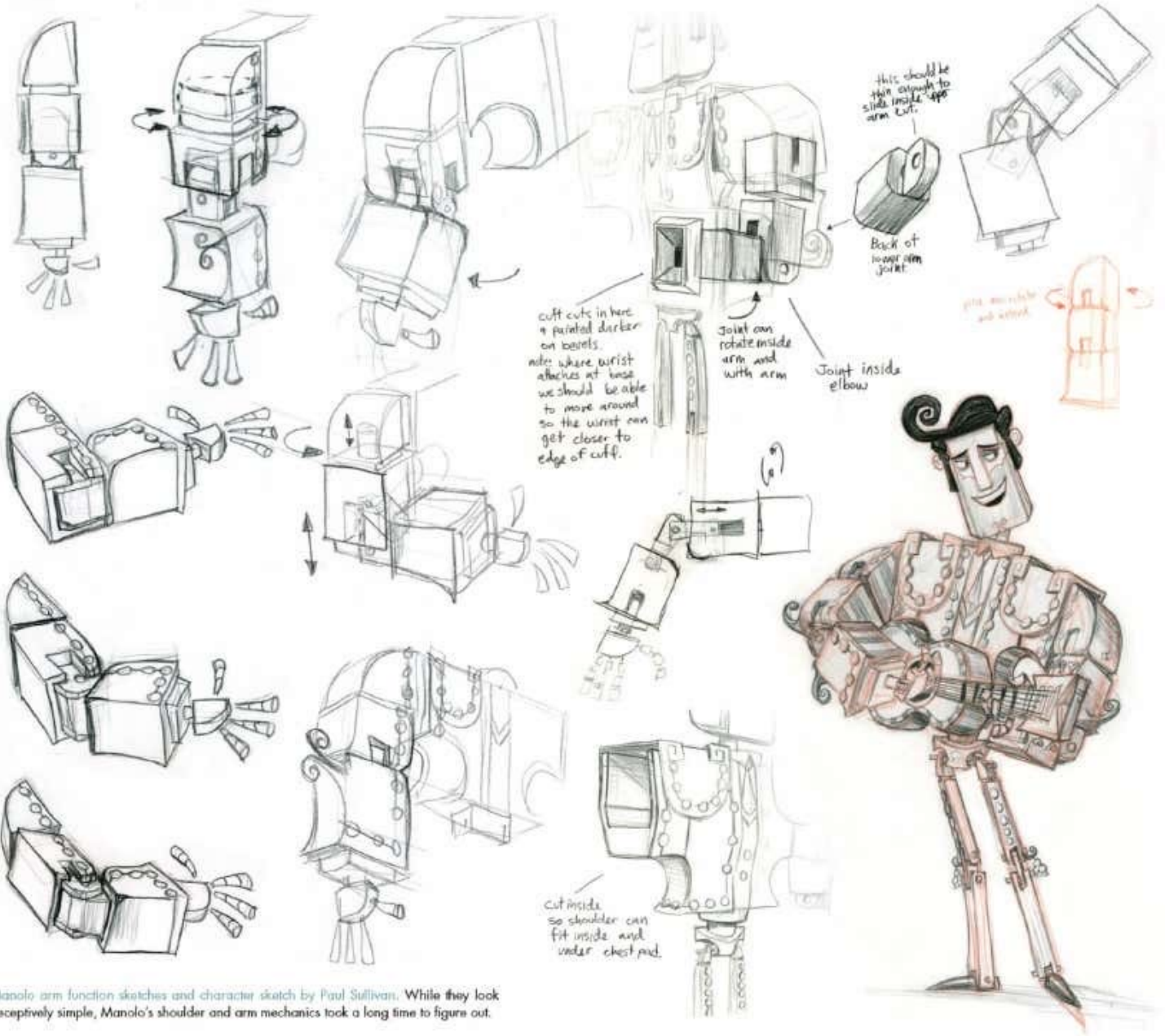
Manolo first sketches by Jorge R. Gutierrez



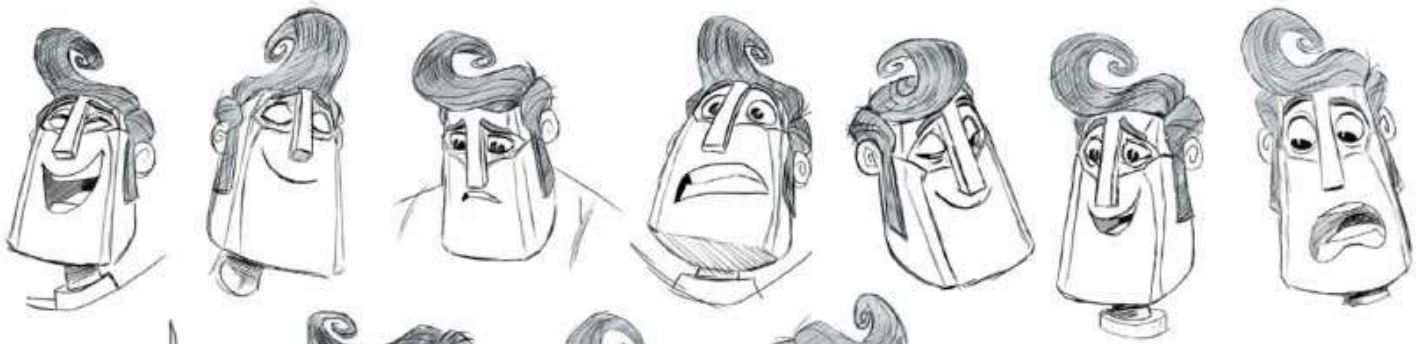
Manolo face explorations by Paul Sullivan

MANOLO

Our hero. Born from a long line of spectacular bullfighters, he is the youngest Sanchez in San Ángel. But unlike most of his super-macho family and to the dismay of his father, Manolo dreams of playing the guitar. Specifically for Maria, the girl of his dreams. I named him Manolo because that name has some major bullfighting connotations (Manolete is one of the most famous bullfighters in taurine history) and because it has the word *man* in it. You see, Manolo is, after all, the everyman.



Manolo arm function sketches and character sketch by Paul Sullivan. **While they look deceptively simple, Manolo's shoulder and arm mechanics took a long time to figure out.**



Manolo face acting explorations by Tara Caulfield

Having the bullfighting swords on his back became a stylistic choice, since real bullfighters don't actually carry their swords. Like most everything in the film, this is a magic realism version of the world and its specific culture.

Manolo sketch by Jorge R. Gutierrez and Simon Varela

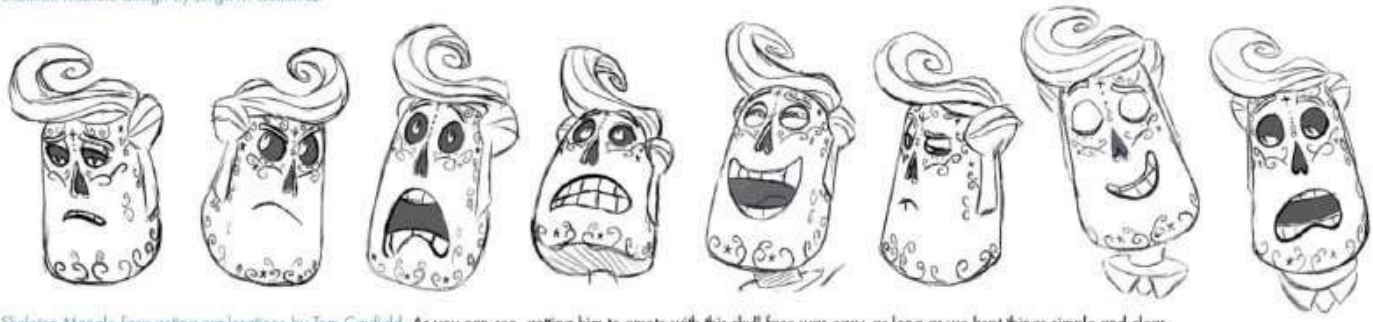
Manolo sculpt by Simon Varela, Vladimir Calderon, and Mauricio Fuentes

Manolo face and hair explorations by Andy Blaik. While we sure experimented with some crazy stuff, we always went back to keeping his hair and face simple and clean. His design had to reflect that on the inside, he was more than he seemed.

Skeleton Manolo design by Jorge R. Gutierrez

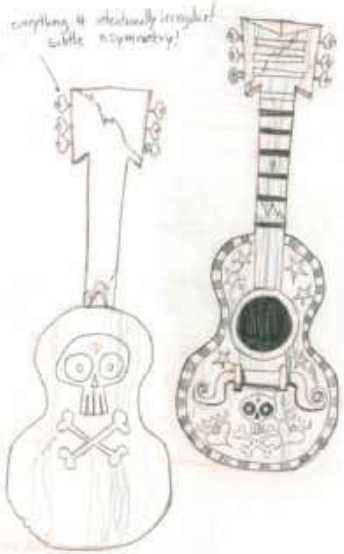
Skeleton Manolo paint by Paul Sullivan

When it came time to design the skeleton version of Manolo, I really wanted him to look as close to the living version as we could get, so only his face and hands changed. I wanted it to be clear that he is the same exact person, just "living" in a different world. And I really wanted to make the skull or *calavera* version of him super stylized and charming. If you look closely at his nose, it's an upside-down heart.



Skeleton Manolo face acting explorations by Tom Caufield. As you can see, getting him to emote with this skull face was easy, as long as we kept things simple and clear.

Top lighting key by Bryan Lashelle, bottom lighting key by Paul Sullivan.



Manolo sketches by Paul Sullivan

Big guitar design by Jorge R. Gutierrez, paint by Paul Sullivan.
The way Manolo played and handled his guitar had to feel gentle and kind since the guitar is an extension of Maria.

Manolo paintings by Paul Sullivan. While working on the Manolo model, our beloved art director, Paul Sullivan, managed to climb into my brain and mustachioed heart and somehow figure out exactly what I was dreaming of. These two paintings are proof!

OLÉ! Here you have the final CG model of Manolo! Look at all that amazing detail and wear and tear. So why the skulls and crossbones on his suit? Like everything in our film, this has a story. Maria gave little Manolo a guitar decorated with a skull and crossbones, and so he matched his suit to his guitar. Duh! And if you look real close, Manolo is wearing his heart(s) on his sleeve. And why no mustache? In a world full of mustaches, the clean-shaven one is the true iconoclast.

Young Manolo design by Jorge R. Gutierrez and Sandra Equihua, texture paint by Sarah Marino, little guitar design by Jorge R. Gutierrez, texture paint by Sarah Marino

Young Manolo acting explorations by Jesse Aclin. As you can see, little Manolo has the Sanchez chin (two little curlicues) and the Sanchez hair curl. I always wanted him to look like a kid who was on his way to becoming a bullfighter, so we designed him to look a little macho. His little red guitar is a nod to everything Sandra and I created before this film. This guitar had to break in order for Manolo to grow up. And it's red because that's Maria's favorite color.

Young Manolo bullfighting explorations by Dustin d'Arnault

"Adios, Amigos" color key by Paul Cheng

Young Manolo design by Jorge R. Gutierrez and Sandra Equihua, texture paint by Sarah Marino

Young Manolo acting explorations by Sylvain Deboissy. Little Manolo is actually based on the protagonist of my CalArts student film, *Carmelo*. The idea for the Mexican wooden puppets came from his design while I dreamt of making an animated feature about my love for the Day of the Dead and my culture in general.

Young Manolo color key by Paul Sullivan

Maria and Chuy original design by Katie Rice, painting by Paul Sullivan

Maria's fan design by Sandra Equihua, texture paint by Sarah Marino.
Maria's personality was inspired by all the strong women in my life: my wife, my sister, and my mother. Her look was inspired by my favorite Mexican actresses from the golden era of Mexican cinema.

Maria wedding dress *(left)* and ballroom dress *(right)* by Sandra Equihua

MARIA & CHUY

The jewel of the town! The general's daughter! The love of Manolo and Joaquin! Maria is all that and more. Way more! But she's no damsel in distress. Incredibly smart, humble, fierce, and kind, Maria is unlike any girl the town has ever seen. Chuy, her pet pig, is a symbol of her rebellion and her cause: freedom of the oppressed.

After I finished Manolo, Sandra designed Maria so that she and Manolo would have great visual chemistry together. All their shapes complement each other: she is all circles, and he's all squares. And look closely: she has the Sanchéz curl next to her eyes. She only has eyes for Manolo.

Maria original design by Sandra Equihua, texture paint by Gerald de Jesus

Maria acting explorations by Sylvain Deboissy

Maria acting explorations by Paul Sullivan. People have asked why her eyes are so big. Well, if the eyes are the window to the soul, then our Maria has an incredibly large soul. And I love cute anime girl designs.

Maria acting explorations by Toni Caufield

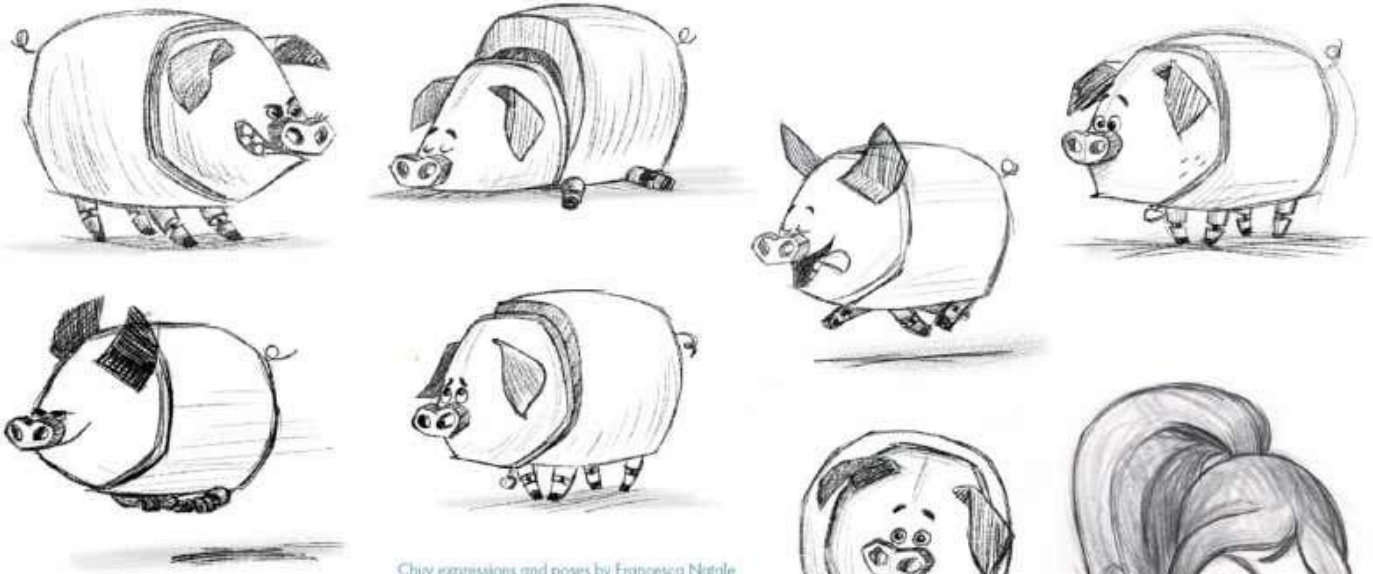
Maria sculpt by Simon Varela, Mauricio Fuentes, and Dinora Zelaya Galeas. We treated her giant hair like it was a superhero cape to help frame her face and silhouette her poses more clearly.

Maria paint by Paul Sullivan

Maria color key by Bryan Lashelle

Her outfit is very much a nod to Frida Kahlo. Frida wore folkloric Mexican clothing as a statement of her rebellion and an embrace of the people's culture in Mexico.

And here is the amazing final model! I completely adore how she turned out. We think she looks stunning and ready to kick some major *bandido* butt. Her shirt is white (to represent her purity) and covered with folkloric flowers. Her skirt, also embellished with flowers, is red as a nod to a bullfighter's *capote* and the red in the Mexican flag. As a lover of animated films, I was always waiting for the Latina princess to finally show up. Ladies and gentlemen, she is here. But this *chica* is no princess.



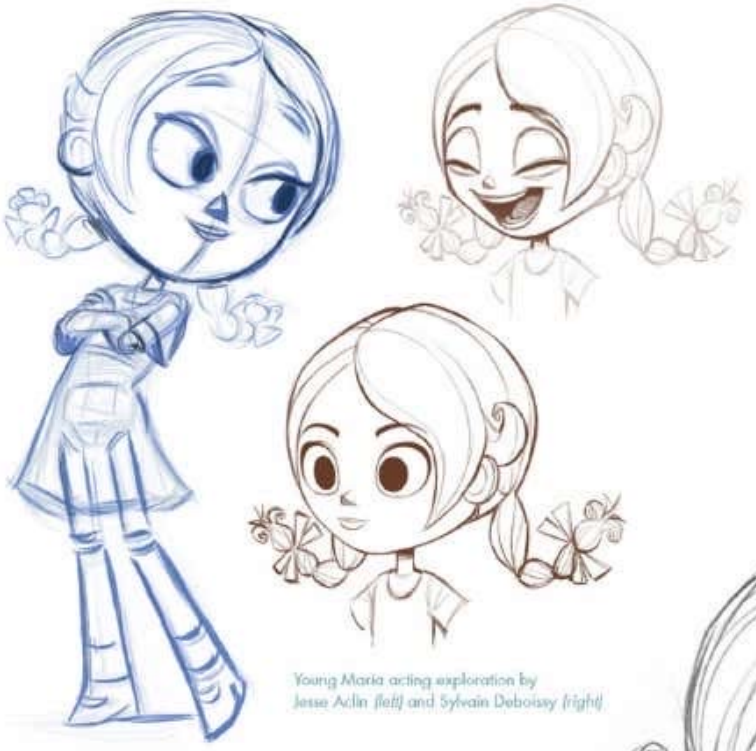
Chuy expressions and poses by Francesca Natale

Chuy and Maria sketch
by Paul Sullivan

Chuy original design by Sandra Equihua, texture paint by Gerald de Jesus. I took the first stab at designing Chuy and I was pretty proud of myself. Then Sandra laughed and designed him a thousand times better.

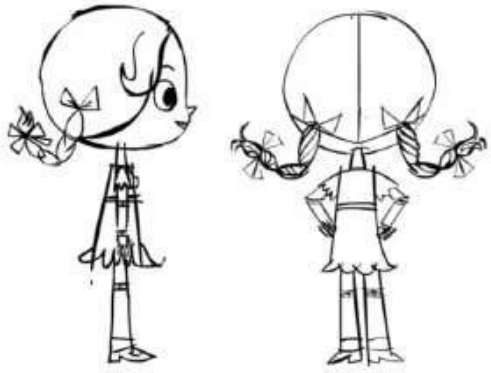
Chuy is a somewhat-confused three-hundred-pound pig, in that he sounds like a goat, acts like a dog, and thinks he's a puppy. But Maria loves him anyway. Why? Because he's happy with who he is, regardless of what others think of him. Just like . . . Manolo.

Chuy and Maria expressions and poses by Tom Caulfield



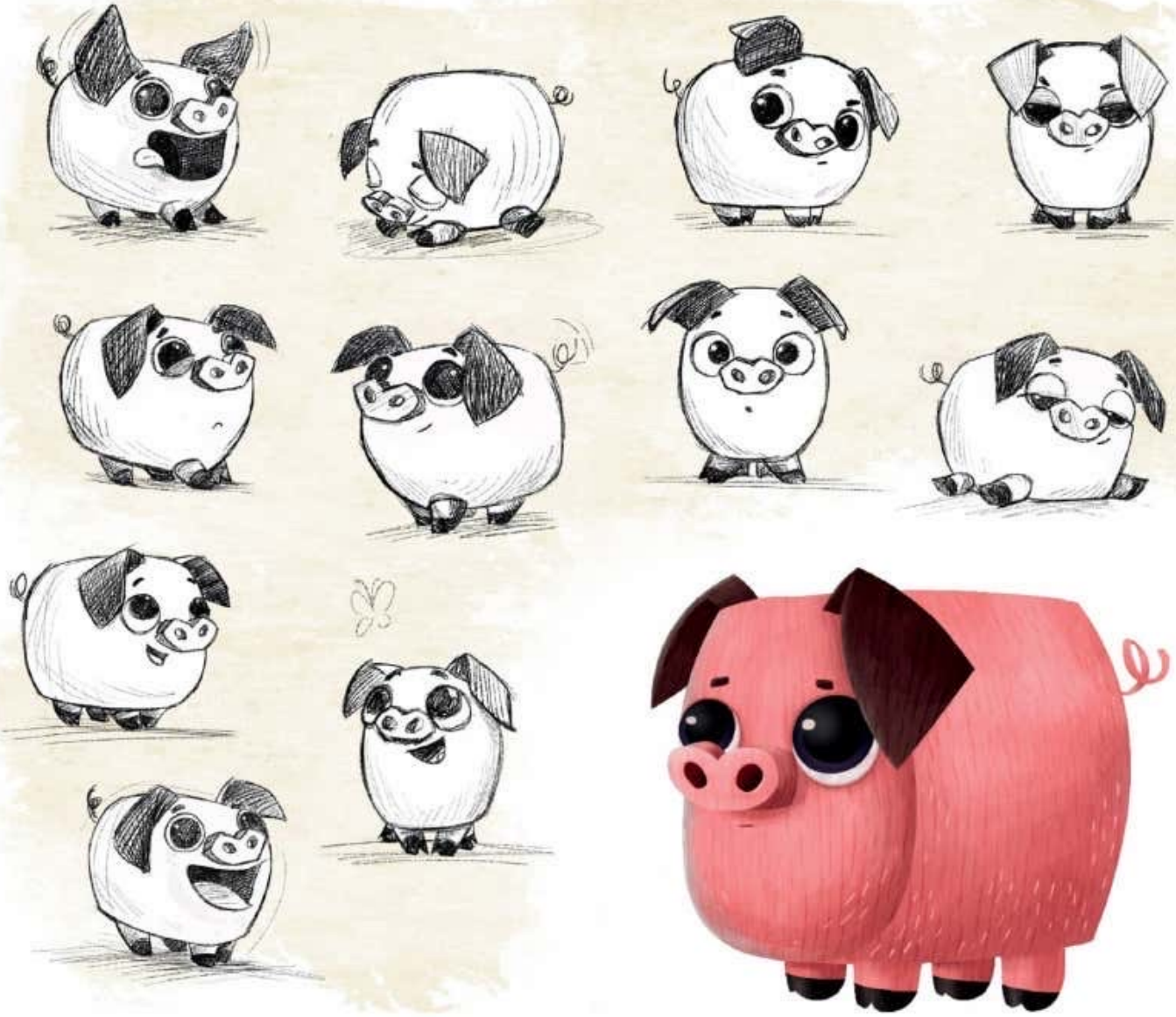
Young Maria acting exploration by Jesse Aclin *(left)* and Sylvain Deboissy *(right)*

Baby Chuy acting explorations by Francesca Natale



Young Maria original turnaround sketch by Sandra Equihua. We based young Maria on Sandra, who as a little girl was also a rebellious tomboy with a somewhat serious father. Maria's pigtails are a nod to her love of pigs and a symbol of her father trying to control and contain her wild ways.

Young Maria and baby Chuy sketch by Carlos Luzzi



Baby Chuy acting explorations by Francesca Natale. **Baby Chuy was perhaps one of my all time favorite Sandra creations, because he was designed to look like a little sausage.**

Baby Chuy original design by Sandra Equihua, texture paint by Gerald de Jesus

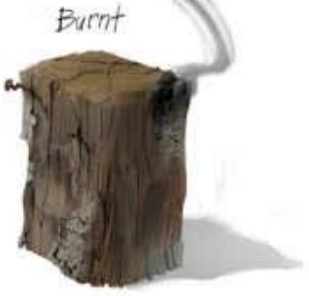
Young Maria acting explorations by Jesse Aclin

Painting by Travis Keller and Paul Sullivan. The first intro of Chuy is a big moment in the film for little Maria. We establish early in the story that she is a rebel without a cause. At this very moment, Maria finds her cause.

Young Maria acting explorations by Sylvain Deboissy

Young Maria original design by Sandra Equihua, texture paint by Gerald de Jesus

I asked Sandra to design young Maria's outfit to be an exact kid version of what she wears as an adult. Unlike young Manolo and Joaquin when we first meet all three kids in the cemetery, young Maria has already formed who she really is.



Each of our lands is associated with a specific material. In the Land of the Living, our characters and other elements are carved from wood as an homage to Mexican folk art; every detail in our world helps reinforce our story. The wood is a symbol of life and all living things. These paintings are examples of different types of wooden characters and locations we see in the film.

We gave each land its own shape and color association before we created more elaborate details. We later established overall design rules that would apply to everything in each land. This way we were able to make sure the design had a different feeling in each land while maintaining a consistent style at the same time. This was the foundation of all the designs in our film.

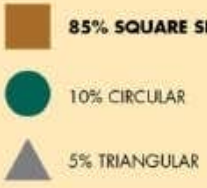
LAND OF THE LIVING

- *Lived in/aged*
- *Life is tough*

DOMINANT COLOR IS A WARM DESATURATED SEPIA

MAIN INGREDIENTS

SKULLS
HEARTS
TALAVERA POTTERY & DESIGN
ADOBE & TITLE ARCHITECTURE
WROUGHT IRON
CACTI
COBBLESTONE
PLANTS & GROWTH



Art by Paul Sullivan

CHAPTER TWO

MAKING OF
THE BOOK OF LIFE

LAND OF THE REMEMBERED

- *Happy & whimsical*
- *Mix of: Mayan, Spanish colonial, Mexican folk art*

DOMINANT COLOR IS A COOL GREEN

MAIN INGREDIENTS

SKULLS
HEARTS
FLOWER PETALS FLOAT UPWARDS
PLANT LIFE & GROWTH
CIRCULAR LIGHT SHAFTS FROM SKY
PAPER FLAGS
WROUGHT IRON & CANDLES
TOMBSTONES

15% SQUARE SHAPES

80% CIRCULAR

5% TRIANGULAR

LAND OF THE FORGOTTEN

- *Despair*
- *Desperation*
- *Sad/depressing*

DOMINANT COLOR IS A DESATURATED GRAY

MAIN INGREDIENTS

STALACTITES & STALAGMITES
ASH FALLS FROM TOP
CHARCOAL TREES
GIANT CHAINS

5% SQUARE SHAPES

5% CIRCULAR

90% TRIANGULAR

Mondragon side of town painting by Travis Koller and Paul Cheng

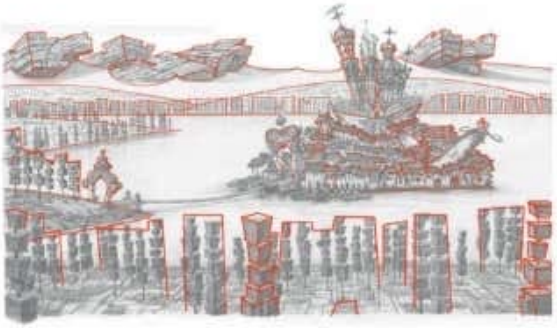
Design by Paul Sullivan. I really wanted to convey that these buildings would fall if they weren't leaning on each other for support. Just like the people in the town. The buildings in San Ángel are top heavy to make them feel more macho, since this is a tough Mexican town.

LAND OF THE LIVING
SHAPES & COLORS

In the middle of this land is the little town of San Ángel, located in the center of a skull-shaped lake in the middle of a desert. The town is inspired by the real island town of Janitzio in Mexico. The name San Ángel comes from the part of Mexico City where I went to school and fell in love with *Día de los Muertos*.

Block design by Frederick Gardner

Color script by Paul Sullivan



San Ángel town design by Simon Varela.
The people of San Ángel have been through a lot together. They're always rebuilding. You can see strong square shapes in almost everything, from the mountains on the horizon to the rooftops and the church in the center of the town. These shapes are balanced by round hills covered with cacti, nopales, and agave.

San Ángel town painting by Paul Sullivan

The colors in this sequence needed to feel happy and nostalgic, since this was the last time the three kids would have fun before they were separated.

Design by Simon Varela

Wild boar house by Paul Cheng. The shapes in this land are mostly squares, but we still use circles and triangles in smaller proportions. Every shape has meaning and symbolism and helps us tell our story visually. Even the clouds are square. Our color palette is an homage to spaghetti westerns and vintage Mexican travel posters, with everything rooted in a strong, warm sepia.

Lighting keys by Travis Koller

Town painting by Rustam Hasanov and Paul Sullivan

Lighting keys by Travis Koller and Paul Sullivan

Designs by Paul Sullivan

Round shapes are dominant in this land. Architectural elements go off the frame to indicate that this world is always growing and full of life.

LAND OF THE REMEMBERED
SHAPES & COLORS

Ruled by La Muerte, this is the most magical and visually unique land in the film. As long as you did something memorable and people loved you, then you would get to go to this incredible place full of life, music, parties, and everything you ever loved when you were alive. It's like the core belief of the Day of the Dead embodied in a magical place. The buildings and shapes are a visually rich mix of Spanish colonial with Aztec, Mayan, and Olmec influences.

Stylized skull shapes are hidden in every doorway, window, building, and arch. They are balanced with wrought-iron hearts and rounded design elements.

Color script by Paul Sullivan. Knowing this was going to be the most colorful sequence in the film, we really pulled back all the colors before Manolo woke up as a skeleton in this magical realm.

Painting by Paul Sullivan. The scale of the Land of the Remembered is massive, and to convey that, we grouped buildings into round formations. All of the corners are rounded to show the age of the stone. The palette is bright and festive and plays off of the dark sky, with a colorful canopy of leaves and flower petals that magically come together to resemble Mayan and Aztec patterns.

We had to be extra careful that the vibrant and saturated colors didn't overwhelm the frame or we would lose our hero.

Designs by Paul Sullivan. In an earlier draft of the script, Manolo's family reunion took place in his family's hacienda. This drawing was the first to show what an interior space would look like in the Land of the Remembered. Our doorways are skull shaped, with Spanish arches at the top.

This was a design for how the shapes would look at the street level.

Color script by Paul Sullivan

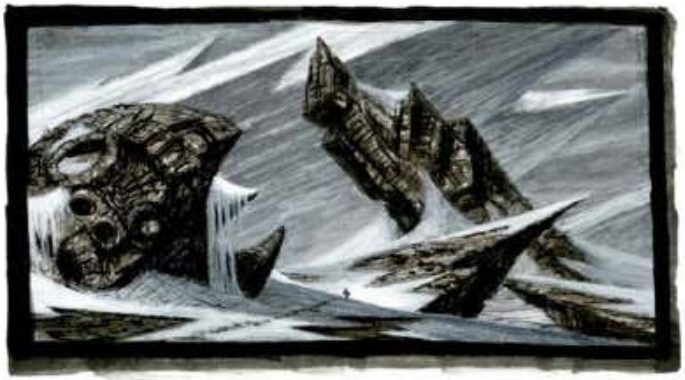
Painting by Patrick Jensen. Inspired by my eternal love for Mexican folk art, we used a lot of complementary colors in this realm. The colors are designed to complement each other but look otherworldly. All the guitar-shaped buildings in the Land of the Remembered remind Manolo to be himself.

This travel-montage sequence showcases the more mysterious areas in the Land of the Remembered. Even though Manolo is a skeleton, there are unknown forces that can still hurt him.

Designs by Simon Varela. The theme of mostly jagged triangles with some round shapes represents how dangerous this land can be to our heroes.

LAND OF THE FORGOTTEN
SHAPES & COLORS

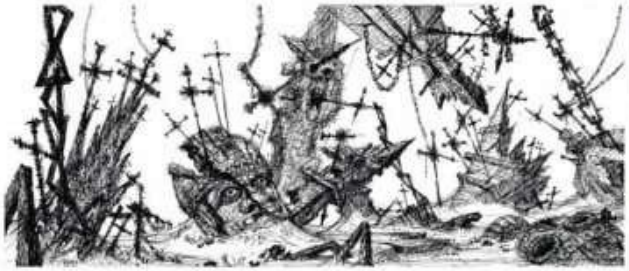
Ruled by Xibalba, this is a cold and desolate realm full of regret and sadness. If you did bad things in your life or just didn't really do anything good or memorable, I'm afraid you would end up here. The inspiration for this place was black-and-white photos of the aftermath of catastrophic events. If the Land of the Remembered is full of warmth and happy memories, then the Land of the Forgotten had to be cold and full of things that no one wanted to remember.



The Land of the Forgotten is primarily made of triangle shapes. The peaks are covered with an ash that falls down like snow, helping to separate elements.

Layout design by Clayton Stillwell. This land is mostly devoid of color, to help make the other worlds look more colorful.

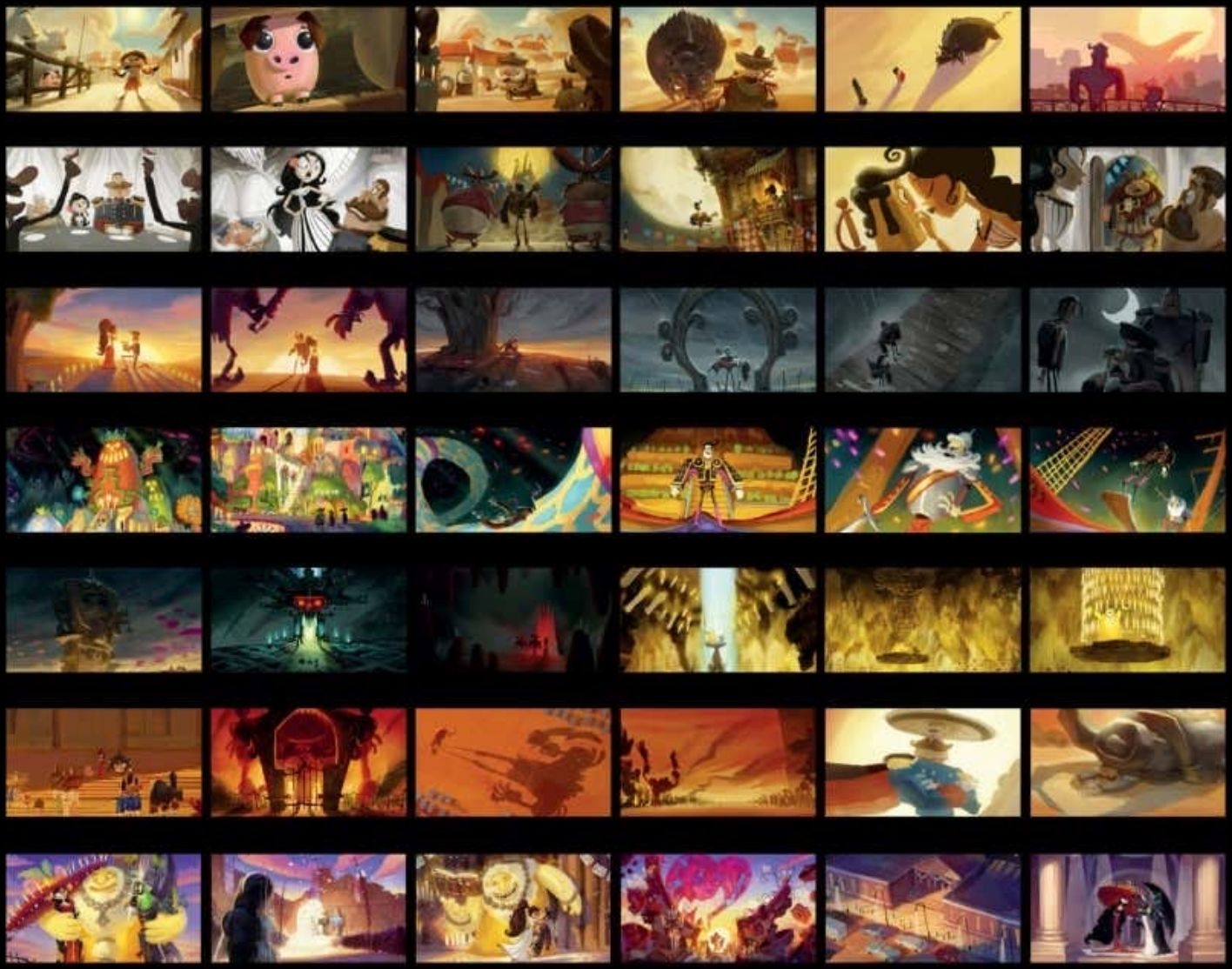
Architecture sketch by Simon Varela. This whole world is composed of forgotten structures that are falling apart, being held down by giant chains. Even our light-shaft shapes are angled. The materials are mostly charcoal ash and obsidian, with metal elements, such as wrought iron and chains.



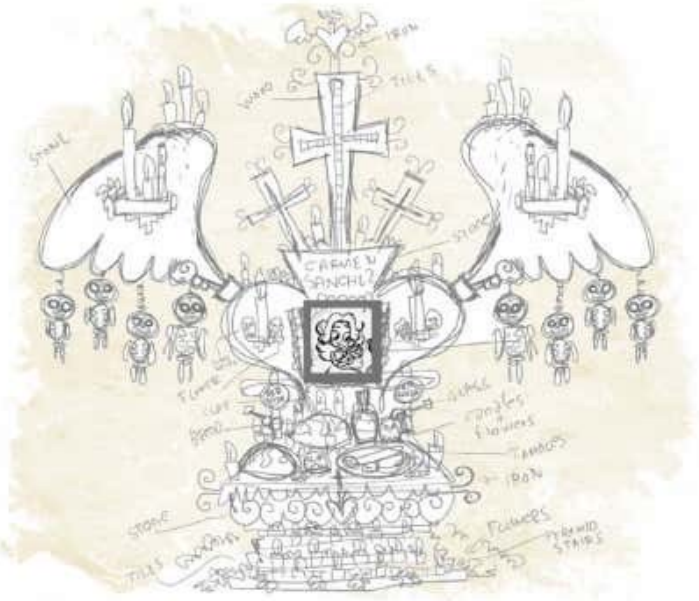
Painting by Paul Sullivan

Color script by Paul Sullivan. After emerging from the Cave of Souls waterfall, we arrive in a desaturated land.

Paul Sullivan: I started the color script by matching up the story beats with an emotional graph so I could visually see the highs and lows in the story. I used this as a guide to help me choose the right colors with Jorge, since he had very specific color ideas in the script for the emotion and arcs of the story.



Painting by Yashar Tahtolkassai



Design by Jorge R. Gutierrez

SAN ÁNGEL CEMETERY

We wanted to make the cemetery feel like a super-colorful place filled with offerings atop the *cantera* stone tombs, from *talavera* pottery and flowers to food and drinks, sugar skulls, breads, and photos. Everything was bordered with marigold petals. It's the most colorful area of the town and a bright window into the Land of the Remembered.

Tomb designs by Miguel Gonzalez. A *Día de los Muertos* altar looks like a festive shrine to the life of the person being honored. Carmen's altar had to look both modest and spectacularly different from the other graves. I wanted it to feel like a giant heart with wings that could hug little Manolo.

CHAPTER THREE

LOCATIONS
OF THE BOOK OF LIFE

Lighting key by Will Martinez and Paul Sullivan

PART 1

LAND OF THE LIVING

The two large images are some of the first shots we created of the cemetery at night. They show two key story moments, when old man Xibalba and La Muerte, in their human forms, choose their mortal champions. You can see how the color in the final lighting keys goes from being much colder when playing up Xibalba's desaturation to the warmth of La Muerte.

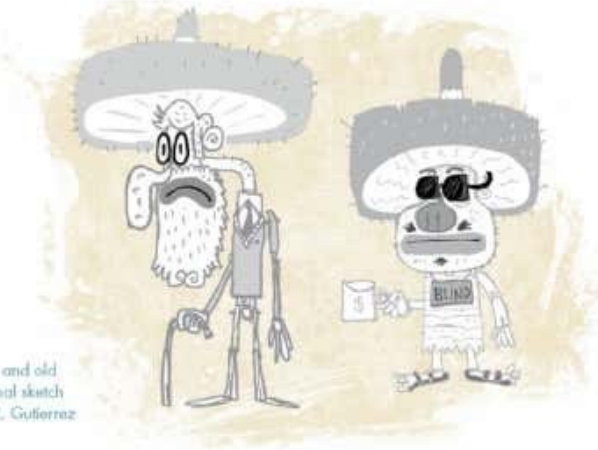
Lighting keys by Bryan Leshelle (top and right), early color script shots by Paul Sullivan (middle and bottom)

Pottery designs by Jordan Lamarre-Wan, paint by Sarah Marino. *Talavera* pottery decorated with cacti and other plants helped us get more color in areas of the town that were dominated by warm tones.

Stampede lighting keys by Travis Koller. During the stampede sequence we really establish the spaghetti western color palette in the Land of the Living. Everything is mixed with a sepia tone, so when we travel to the other worlds there is a distinct color shift.

Design by Craig Elliott, painting by Iván Aquino

Blind man ortho view by Shane Richardson, paint by Gerald de Jesus



Blind man and old man original sketch by Jorge R. Gutierrez

Aside from the generic townsmen, I really wanted to have more specific men commenting on and reacting to the affairs of San Ángel. The old man is supposed to be the voice of the old ways of the town. The blind man represents how blind the town is to its own faults.

Old man ortho view by Shane Richardson, paint by Gerald de Jesus

Amparo ortho view by Alison Donato, paint by Gerald de Jesus

Amparo original sketch by Sandra Equihua

Amparo original color by Sandra Equihua. Amparo was originally designed to be Maria's mother and General Posada's wife. Sandra designed her to look like what General Posada wanted Maria to be: a submissive and proper lady.

Ignacio original design by Jorge R. Gutierrez

Ignacio ortho view by Shane Richardson, paint by Ivan Aguirre. Ignacio the orphan is the young voice of the town. In the end he plays Manolo's guitar to symbolize the young generation embracing music in San Ángel.

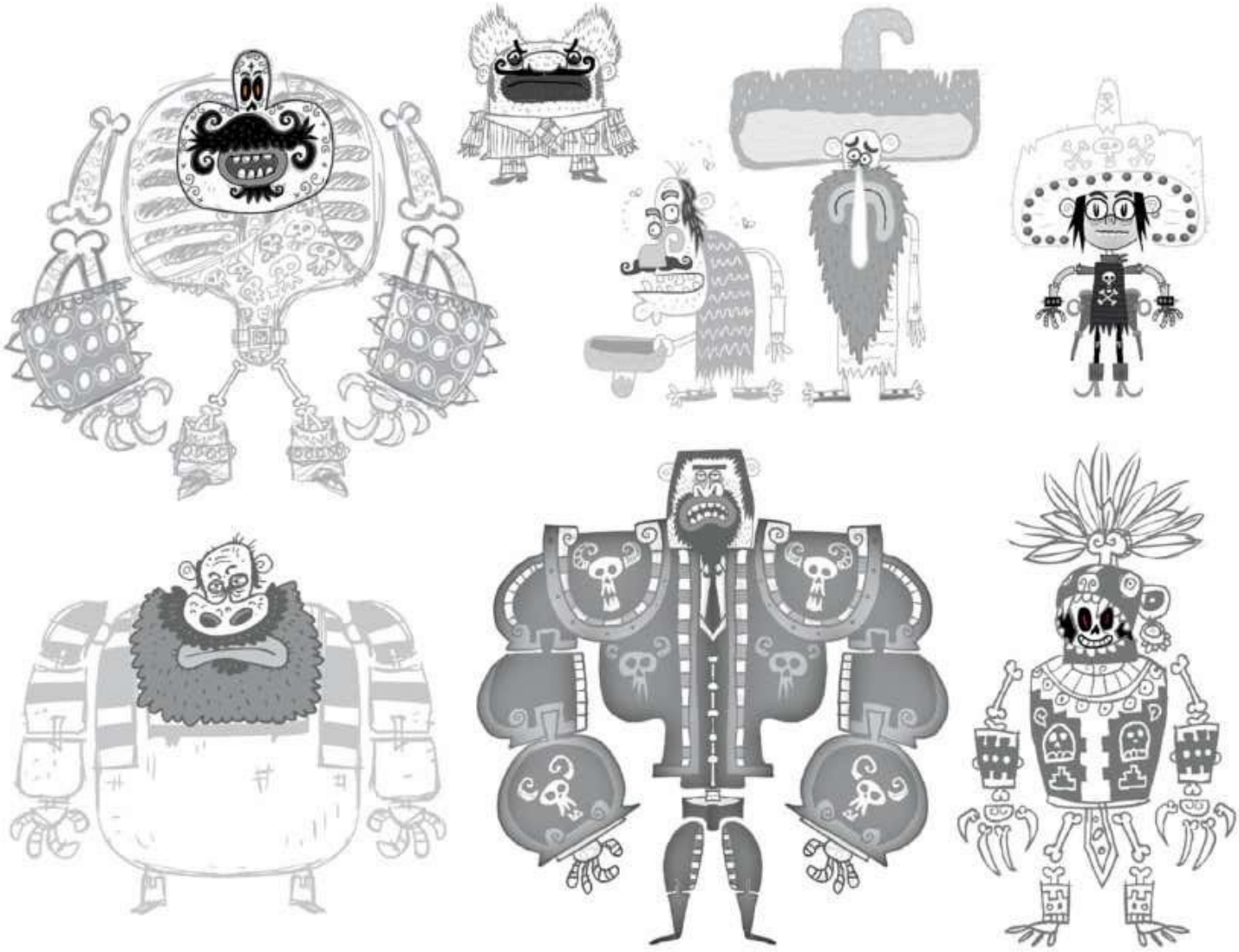
Cowardly soldiers design by Jorge R. Gutierrez, texture paint by Sarah Marino and Shane Richardson. These soldier designs are my unabashed love letter to Picasso. These are the type of cartoony, cubist design experiments I have always wanted to see in CG animation. The backstory of these guys is that they stayed behind during the revolution to protect the women and children, so they had never actually fought anyone before.

Cowardly soldiers original sketch by Jorge R. Gutierrez

Townswomen by Sandra Equihua

Townswomen by Sandra Equihua, texture paint by Sarah Marino. The crowds in San Ángel are composed of variations of these three female designs by Sandra. My mandate to Sandra was to make sure the colors felt unique and Mexican but didn't steal your eye from the main characters.

Rough sketch of townswomen by Sandra Equihua

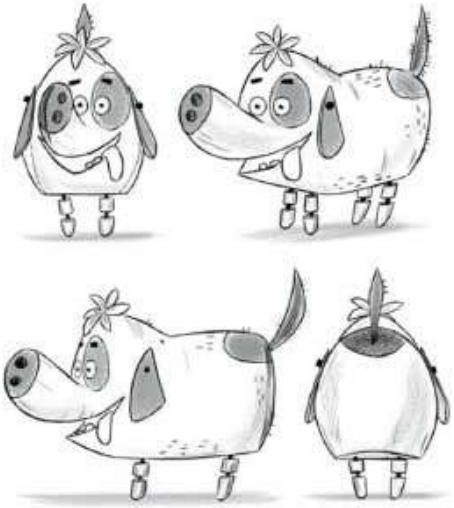


Skeleton strongman, bullfight promoter, beggars outside of church, bandit oil boy, butcher, macho bullfighter, and skeleton Montezuma original sketches by Jorge R. Gutierrez. These character designs, and many, *many* more, did not make it into the film, but they will give you a glimpse of some of the story ideas that were eventually cut.

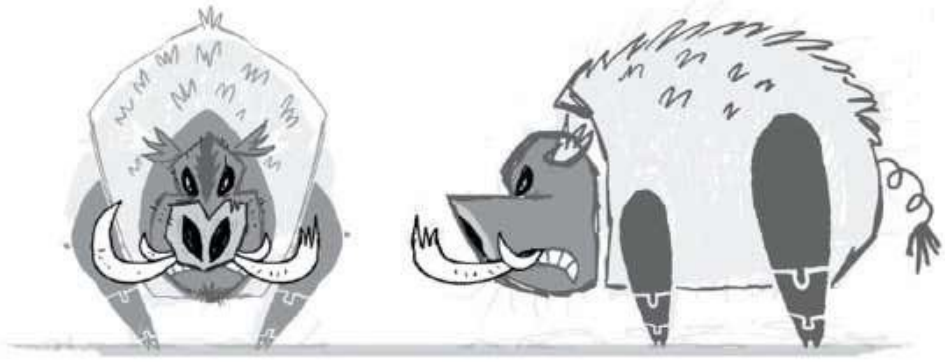
Loony girl, skeleton trapeze girl, Tiffany the American, chicle boy, and young Carmen by Sandra Equihua. Luka the orphan and Cousin Simon Sanchez by Jorge R. Gutierrez. For example, the blond girl above was going to be an American visitor who showed up at the wedding at the end to imply that there were folk art characters from all over the world. The young Carmen design was from a backstory sequence where we found out how she met and eventually fell in love with Manolo's father, Carlos.

Pretty girls by Sandra Equihua. These are the high-society mean girls of San Ángel. Unlike Maria, they were designed to look like they were obsessed with expensive clothing.

Wild boar design by Jorge R. Gutierrez and Francesca Natale, texture paint by Gerald de Jesus. The wild boar design was important because I needed to show that not all animals are cuddly and cute.



Dog turnaround by Francesca Natale



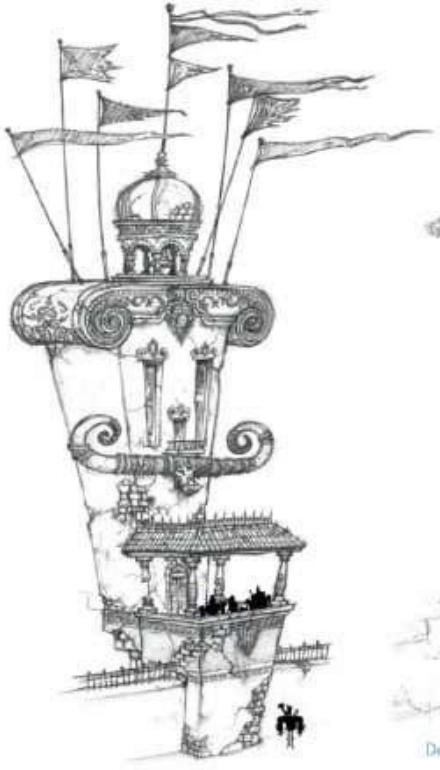
Wild boar original sketch by Jorge R. Gutierrez

Dog design by Sandra Equihua, texture paint by On Krapook. The little dog design was modeled to look exactly like this, so he can't actually walk to the right.

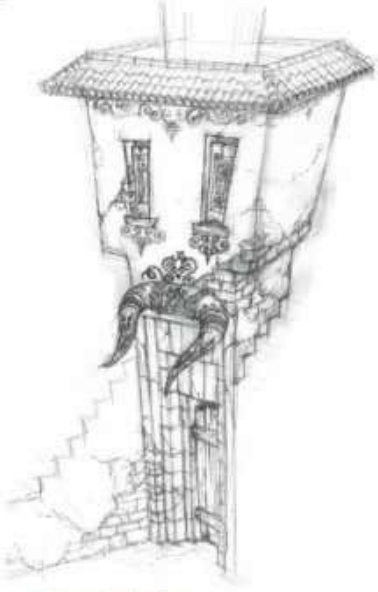
San Angel style frame paint by Yashar Tahtolkassai

Plaza gate design by Frederick Gardner

Design by Clayton Stillwell



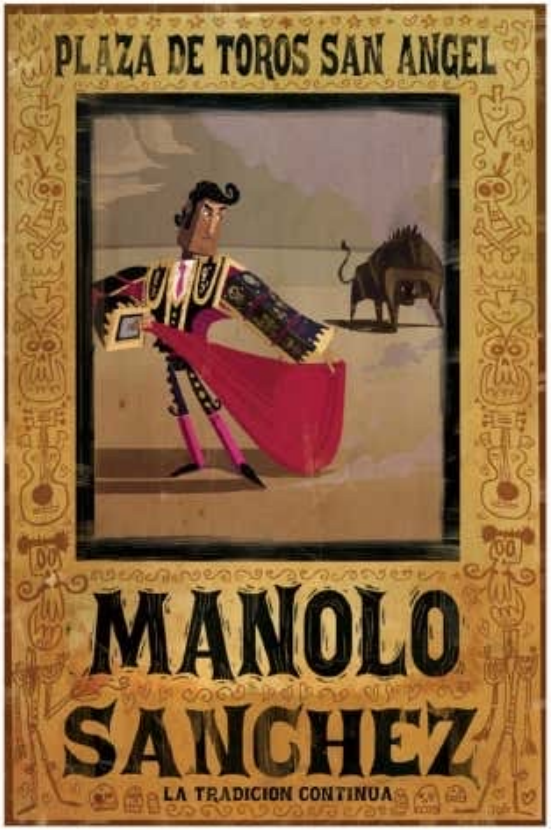
The box that Maria, General Posada, and Joaquin sit in is designed to resemble a Sanchez matador, the top being the hat and the bull horn resembling a mustache.



Designs by Allen Tam

BULLFIGHTING ARENA

We designed the San Ángel arena to be large, but tiny in comparison with that of the Land of the Remembered. We based the design on a traditional rural Mexican bullfighting arena, and made it our own through the materials and colors specific to our world.



Manolo bullfighting poster design by Jorge R. Gutierrez and Alison Donato

Bull design by Jorge R. Gutierrez

Assino bull design by Jorge R. Gutierrez, ortho view by Shane Richardson, paint by Gerald de Jesus

The bull and anything related to bullfighting in the film is my very personal and stylized take on this controversial sport that has inspired countless artists, like Picasso, Hemingway, Dali, and Goya, and animators, like Tex Avery and Chuck Jones. Bullfighting is nothing like we show in the film, which was always on purpose.

Arena style frame paint by Alfonso Blaas. Salvador Dali was definitely an influence for the color and design in this sequence.

Plaza de Toros lighting key by Paul Cheng

Lighting key by Travis Koller

Style frame by Bryan Lashelle. Manolo and his father walk down the street full of Sanchez posters that leads to the bullfighting plaza. This is the moment when Manolo has to live up to the family tradition. The moment when Carlos shows him the plaza is supposed to blow him away and cause him to embrace his matador destiny.

Sanchez matador oil painting drawings by Dustin d'Arnault, paint by Paul Cheng. The Sanchez posters and portraits are everywhere in San Ángel as a reminder of how much people remember them. But they also serve as a constant point of comparison for poor Manolo. I wanted him to feel like his ancestors were unhappy that he was not following in their footsteps.

Sanchez matador posters by Pakoto Martinez and Jorge R. Gutierrez. I really wanted these posters to look like a local San Ángel painter had painted them. Carmelo being the oldest, his poster had to look the most ancient.

Posters in Maria's bedroom by Sandra Equihua and Jorge R. Gutierrez, Taj Mahal poster by Tod Polson

Maria's bedroom was designed by her father to be that of a proper lady, and so the colors are monochromatic and gray. These colorful posters reflect her rebel spirit. The travel posters are meant to be windows to all the places she dreams of visiting as a little girl.

Grandma Sanchez and Grandma Sanchez skeleton by Sandra Equihua, texture paint by Sarah Marino. Grandma Sanchez is based on my grandmother, who was very loving and supportive but also very tough on me. Sandra really captured her essence. I also wanted her to feel like an onion for some reason. This was one of the first characters painted, so we were able to really sell to everyone the idea that the wood texture would reflect the age of each character in the film.

Grandma Sanchez by Alison Donato

Grandma Sanchez original sketch by Sandra Equihua *(left)*, ortho views by Alison Donato *(right)*. Aside from delivering some funny one-liners, Grandma is also the voice of reason. Just like my grandma back in Mexico City.

Carlos Sanchez head acting explorations by Carlos Luzzi. Carlos is based on my own father, who is an architect. Growing up he wasn't exactly sure I could make a living making cartoons. A lot of Manolo's interactions with him are lovingly based on those heated conversations.

Carlos Sanchez original design by Jorge R. Gutierrez, texture paint by Gerald de Jesus. The Carlos Sanchez design is a more macho version of Manolo, with stockier legs, a bigger chest, a healthy mustache, and a sword on each side, symbolizing that he's all bullfighter, all the time. He was originally blue, but that made him too similar to Joaquin.

Carlos Sanchez ortho view by Andy Bialk, paint by Travis Koller

Character designs by Jorge R. Gutierrez and Sandra Equihua, background designs by Roman Laney, background colors by Tod Polson, background paint by Roman Laney. **This churro kid gag is the first indication that we're not exactly taking ourselves too seriously.**

The Sanchez ancestor gags were designed to be staged flat to keep them cartoony and comedic. They also were designed to be very similar to help drive the idea that all the Sanchez men were repeating the same mistakes. It would take someone different, like Manolo, to lead the family in a new direction.

Coming from a TV animation background, I was really excited that we were able to get some 2-D sequences into the film. There are hidden Aztec symbols throughout the film. For example, the sun in this sequence below is the Aztec sun god. The image with the *chupacabras* on page 120 includes the Aztec moon goddess.

Character designs by Jorge R. Gutierrez and Sandra Equihua, background designs by Roman Laney, background colors by Tod Polson, background paint by Roman Laney

These images were done to help illustrate the color and shape differences and similarities between the three lands and their respective inhabitants. The San Ángel cathedral is central in each image and reflects the effects of the love or sadness in each land.

GENERAL POSADA'S BALLROOM

The ballroom itself is supposed to be devoid of any color, since it reflects the general's view of the world. The tablecloths are red to represent him honoring Maria, since red is her favorite color.

Paper flag designs by Sandra Equihua. Decorations designed to give us glimpses into the Land of the Remembered.

Lighting key by Will Martinez and Elise Hathaway. General Posada is completely out of his element at this fancy party. Like Joaquin, he would much rather be outside fighting bandits. Maria, on the other hand, can easily navigate both worlds.

Paint by Will Martinez. The design for the ballroom included very beautiful *cantera* stone filigree, to tie into the outside of the mansion, and touches of gold and silver, to show the general's wealth. General Posada is the leader and protector of the town, so we created a military color palette with greens, grays, and blues as a base, but accented it with reds and colorful *talavera* pottery and plants to make the scene feel more like a party.

Paint by Jordan Lamarre-Wan

Paint by Will Martinez

General Posada original design by Jorge R. Gutierrez. The General Posada character and design are both inspired by my grandfather, who was a general in the Mexican military. His name is a nod to the great artist José Guadalupe Posada, who is considered the father of the *Dia de los Muertos* iconography we all know and love. In fact, the font used in the chapter headings of this book and in the film was inspired by his prints from the early 1900s.

General Posada acting explorations by Andy Bialk.

General Posada ortho view and paint by Dustin d'Arnault. Like the bandits and many of the male designs in the film, I wanted to push the idea that Posada's machismo and view of himself were weighing him down. That's why his legs are so tiny. He lost his left hand in a battle with Chakal. Any time he talks about the king of the bandits, you can see him touch it as a reminder. His mustache is supposed to look like flexed arms. The fleur-de-lis soul patch is a symbol of the wealthy Mexicans' obsession with France at the time.

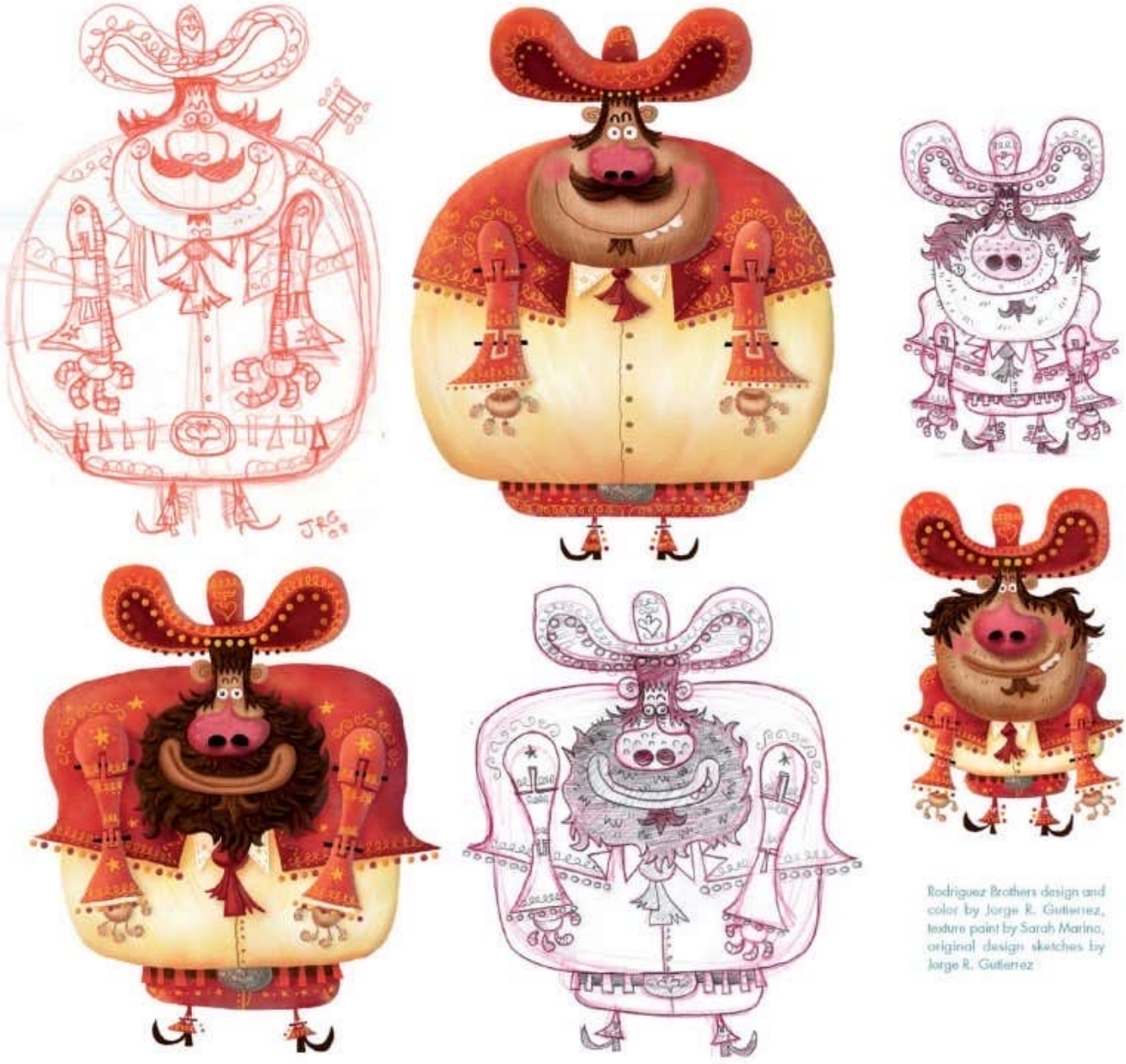
General Posada head acting explorations by Francesca Natale

MARIA'S BALCONY

Like in *Romeo and Juliet*, Maria's balcony is the setting of a very important moment in the film. It is here where Manolo plays and sings his first original song. He's writing his own story. As Manolo opens his soul and sings his heart out, Maria begins to fall in love with him.

Lighting keys by Travis Koller and Paul Sullivan

Style frame painting by Paul Sullivan, mansion design by Simon Varela. Below is the first style frame painting that showed what we were going for in our final film. It also depicts what our town looks like at night. The moon is warm to show the light refracting through the dust in the atmosphere and notched to reflect that our world is hand carved out of wood by artisans. Everything is a little top heavy and asymmetrical.



Rodriguez Brothers design and color by Jorge R. Gutierrez, texture paint by Sarah Marino, original design sketches by Jorge R. Gutierrez

The Rodriguez Brothers, a bunch of goofy mariachis, are Manolo's best friends. The idea was that they were disproportionate triplets. And as you can see, the biggest guy has the smallest instrument and vice versa. The brothers represent everything Manolo's father fears his boy will turn into if he keeps playing the guitar. They are a collective character, since they are always together.

Rodriguez Brothers and Manolo layout by Paul Sullivan, paint by Bryan Lashelle

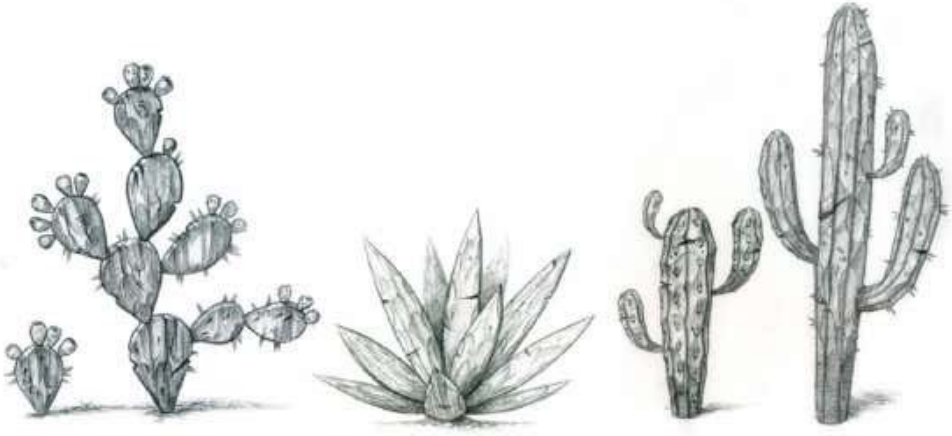
Mariachi instruments by Alison Donato, Sarah Marino, and Shane Richardson, painted girl designs by Sandra Equihua

This is the most romantic moment in our film, so we use lots of round shapes in the hills, clouds, and tree canopy. The colors reflect a romantic palette, with pinks and purples in the sky when the sun comes up.

Proposal Tree design by Jordan Lamarre-Wan

Proposal Tree style frame painting by Larry Kresek and Paul Sullivan

Tree detail by
Jordan Lamarre-Wan

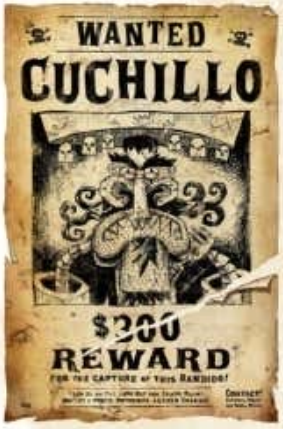


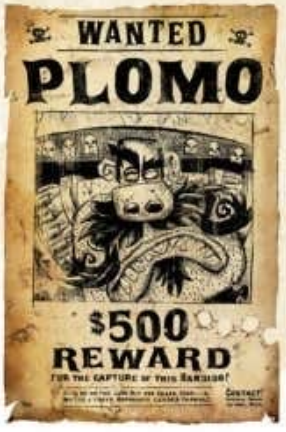
Nopale, agave, and saguaro designs by Jordan Lamarre-Wan

PROPOSAL TREE

The tree design has a burned, charred base and a fresh new canopy, symbolic of the dichotomy of life and loss, and of love repairing itself and growing after being damaged. We made the same wonky notch pattern in the body of the tree and the cacti to reflect the handcrafted quality of our world.

Wanted posters by Dustin d'Arnault. While Chakal, the king of the bandits, doesn't actually show up until the third act, I wanted to keep the threat of him present throughout the film. We plastered the city with wanted posters and had people get upset when his name was spoken.



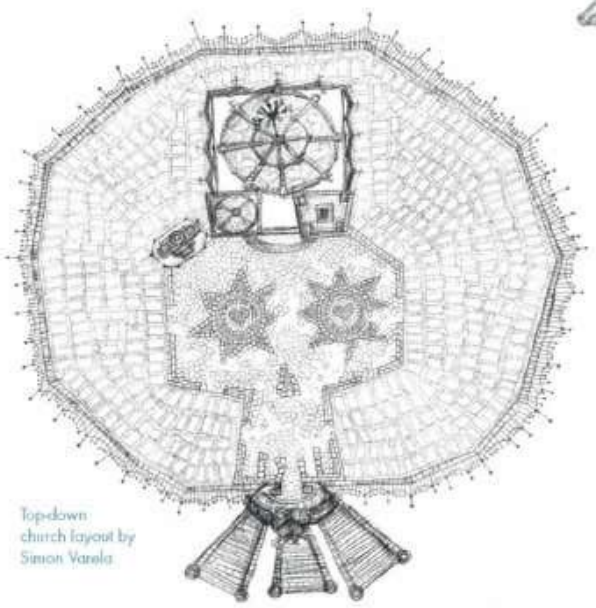


CHAKAL ATTACKS

When Chakal finally shows up in San Ángel, the sky completely changes and becomes very dramatic, like a Mexican movie poster. I wanted it to feel like Chakal had set the sky ablaze.

Chakal's attack lighting keys by Paul Sullivan

Every time we see Chakal, the sky becomes red-orange and the clouds sharp and triangular. It was a challenge to light him because, from his mustache to his chest and shoulders, he has a lot of separate elements.



Top-down church layout by Simon Varela

Church design by Jorge R. Gutierrez and Simon Varela, drawing by Simon Varela. This design is inspired by the Santa Prisca Church in Taxco and the Morelia Cathedral, my two favorite Mexican colonial churches. Simon then added his heart and soul to the design.

SAN ÁNGEL CHURCH

The church is a symbol of the town's courage and resolve. Although it has a shaky foundation, it stands proudly as the town's tallest building. One tower is half-finished to symbolize that like most people in the town, the church is not yet complete. A sacred place for everything from weddings to funerals, the San Ángel church is a huge part of the town's personality.

Church interior design by Simon Varela. Age and wear and tear in the environments helped to imply that these places are full of stories. I really wanted to make hearts and skulls the most important symbols in our film. Simon took that to heart and hid them everywhere.

Design by Clayton Stillwell, paint by Travis Koller

Door design by Frederick Gardner, interior wall design by Allen Tam, paint by Jordan Lamarre-Wan. Every imperfection and detail in the church was hyperdesigned to make it unique to our universe. Symmetry and perfection were our biggest visual enemies. I really wanted everything to feel handmade to imply real people through the ages had built and rebuilt their beloved church.

Nun designs by Sandra Equihua and Jorge R. Gutierrez, texture paint by Sarah Marino. Sister Ana and the nuns were some of the first character designs Sandra and I sketched out. The townspeople were a collective character and each of them represented a different part of the town. The singing nuns represented the town's soul.

2-D San Ángel painting by Roman Laney. Because of my TV animation background and my love for the modernist cartoons of the fifties, all the 2-D sequences in the film were designed to look a bit cubist, flat, and stylized. And they had to look like Mexican murals. Roman Laney, a lifelong collaborator, designed and painted this piece with that idea in mind.

Father Domingo design by Jorge R. Gutierrez, texture paint by Sarah Marino

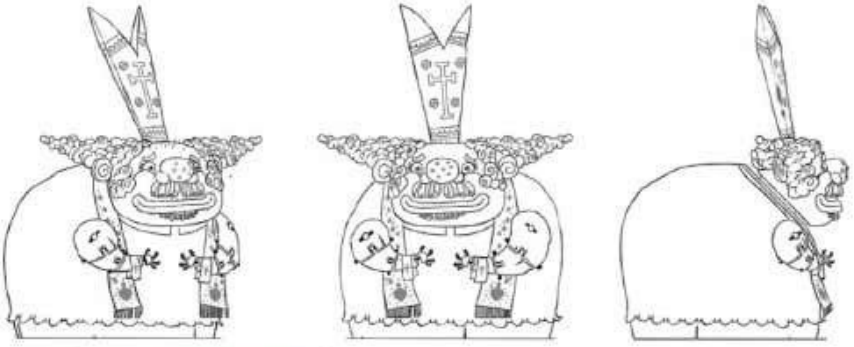
Father Domingo with "Domingo Loco" *lucha libre* mask by Jorge R. Gutierrez and Shane Richardson

Father Domingo original sketch by Jorge R. Gutierrez

Father Domingo acting sketch by Jesse Aclin

FATHER DOMINGO

Father Domingo starts out as a cowardly lion and grows to become "Domingo Loco," a masked Mexican wrestler or *luchador*. Sandra thinks this is my self-portrait. I don't think I agree.



Father Domingo turnaround by Francesco Natale

San Ángel orphans original sketch by Sandra Equihua. The cute little San Ángel orphans were designed to be the symbol of the vulnerability, innocence, and future of San Ángel. Sandra based each one on different kids she knew from her childhood growing up in Tijuana.

San Ángel orphans by Sandra Equihua, texture paint by Sarah Marino. Eagle-eyed viewers will notice that the men in the film have "cartoon pie eyes": eyes that have a triangle piece missing from their pupils. All the women and children have complete round pupils.

Characters by Katie Rice, layout by Simon Varela, paint by Paul Sullivan

City buildings design and paint by Paul Sullivan. Paul Sullivan: When Jorge described to me what he wanted for the Land of the Remembered, my head almost exploded. There are a *lot* of thoughts and ideas that went into this land. The challenge was getting those ideas in there and making them work together. Quite frankly, it was the most challenging thing I've ever designed in my career, hands down. In the end I appreciated the challenge. It wouldn't look the way it does without it.

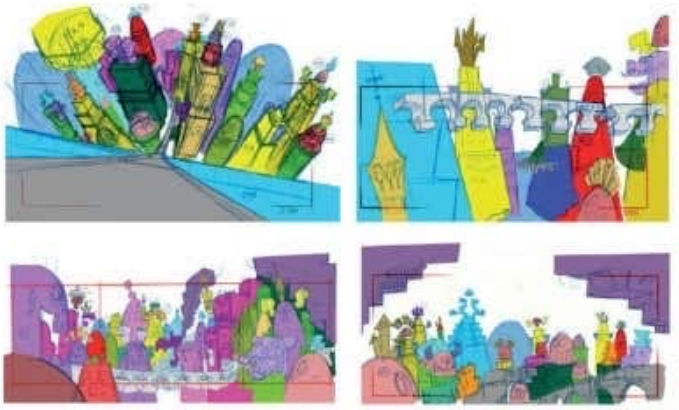
PART II LAND OF THE REMEMBERED

Paul Sullivan: I absolutely loved the idea of showing off the magic of this world by having its individual elements float from the marigold flower petals that are rising up in the sky. It connects with the tombstone designs in the Land of the Living and gives it context. That also helped us have an even wider variety of buildings because it allowed us to mix and match parts in different combinations.

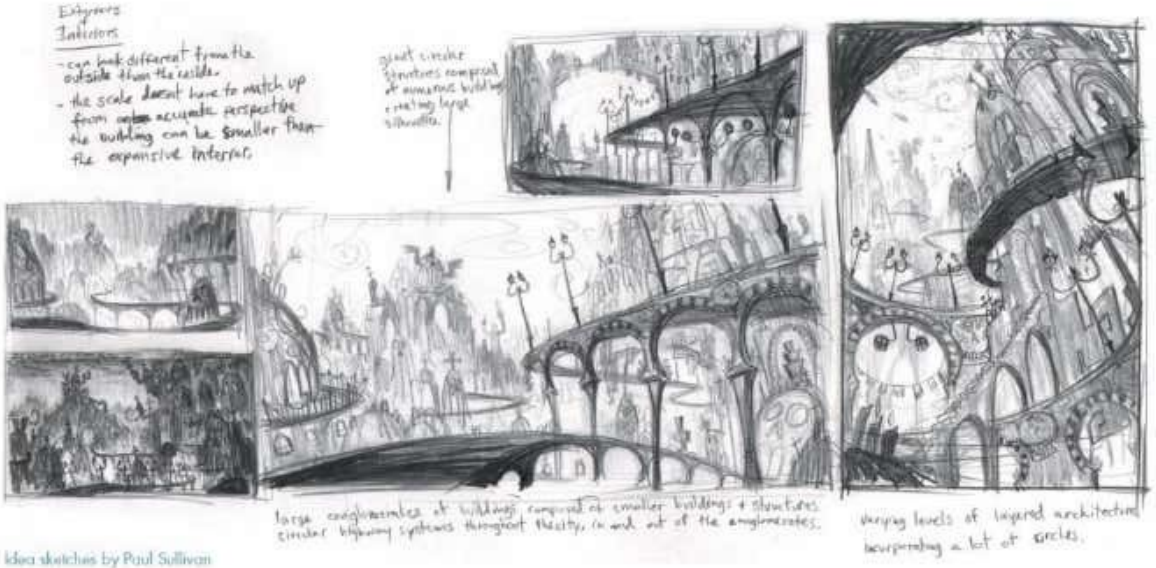
Land of the Remembered conglomerate designs by Paul Sullivan

Conglomerate color sketch by Paul Sullivan

Paul Sullivan: After we gave the story team artwork to get their wheels turning, they did a great job of taking us into the world. I was inspired by them, and it felt like a great collaboration. After the story was solid, we looked closely at what Jorge and the story team had planned for the shots and applied our design. That's when the world really started to take shape.



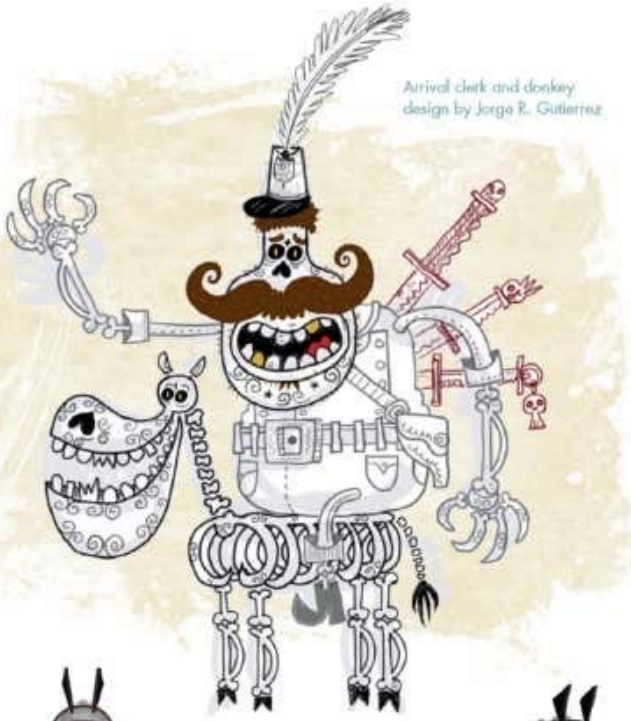
Color placement layouts by Frederick Gardner and Paul Sullivan



Idea sketches by Paul Sullivan

Paul Sullivan: I was on a road trip when an idea popped into my head of conglomerates of buildings. I had already done a few development pieces of the world and just felt like something was missing. I really wanted to push the scale and make sure we could get the arches and rounded shapes in there. This idea stuck with me, and I ended up roughing out these thumbnails as soon as I arrived at the studio.

Skull Tree Hill lighting key by Paul Sullivan



Arrival clerk and donkey design by Jorge R. Gutierrez

Skeleton horse by Miguel Gonzalez and Andy Bialk, paint by Miguel Gonzalez

Arrival clerk by Shane Richardson

This arrival clerk is the first skeleton character Manolo meets when he arrives in the Land of the Remembered. I wanted to design him to feel like a friendly tour guide. His cartoony design also needed to reflect how fun and relaxed this new world would be.

Arrival clerk and skeleton horse acting explorations by Tom Caufield. Our character designs are very shape based and graphic in their inception. Seeing artists like Tom play around with them like this always blows my mind.

Carmen portrait design by Sandra Equihua, paint by Alison Donato

Color key by Paul Sullivan. Manolo is surprised to find that Carmen's feisty personality is very similar to Maria's.

CARMEN

Carmen, the beloved wife of Carlos, and Manolo's mother, passed away when Manolo was very young. Feisty, funny, and very strong, Carmen could more than handle herself with the macho Sanchez family. Just as Manolo's and Maria's names start with the same letter, Carmen and Carlos were meant for each other.

As with Maria, Sandra based Carmen's design on our favorite actresses from the golden era of Mexican cinema. Her *chiapaneca* dress is based on the famous outfits worn by the women of Chiapas, who are known to be tough.

Carmen design by Sandra Equihua; 3/4 paint by Alison Donato

FAMILY REUNION

When Manolo journeys to the Land of the Remembered, he's finally reunited with his mother and meets his Sanchez ancestors, who represent different eras of Mexican history.

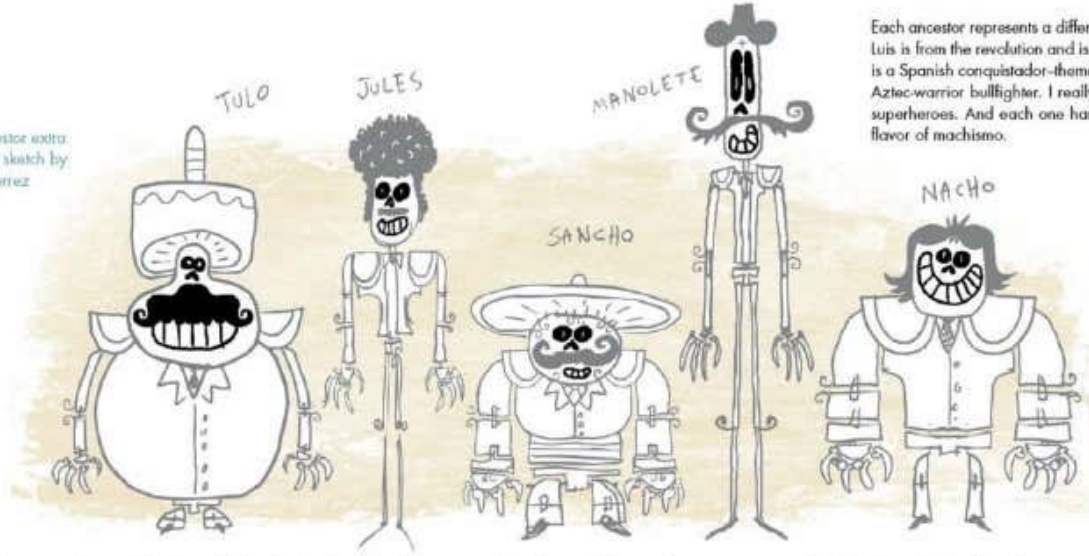
Sketches by Paul Sullivan. Early sketches for what some of the props would look like in Hacienda Sanchez.

Ancestor reunion painting by Paul Sullivan. In an earlier draft, Manolo walked into his childhood home as his family's jaws dropped, literally, in surprise.

Luis, Jorge, and Carmelo lineup sketch by Jorge R. Gutierrez.
My idea for the three main Sanchez ancestor men was that they should each have very specific, yet still related, silhouettes. And each one should be top heavy to feel extra macho.

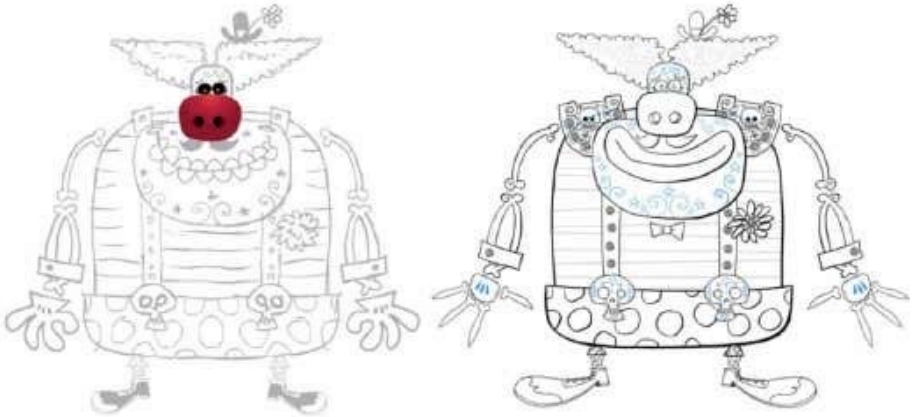
Each ancestor represents a different era of Mexican history. Luis is from the revolution and is a *charro* bullfighter. Jorge is a Spanish conquistador-themed matador. Carmelo is an Aztec-warrior bullfighter. I really wanted them to feel like superheroes. And each one has a different and delicious flavor of machismo.

Sanchez ancestor extra familia lineup sketch by Jorge R. Gutierrez



While I was not able to get them into the film, I had a lot of fun designing extra Sanchez men that were homages to some of my favorite movies, books, video games, and comics.

Cousin Chucho ortho view and paint by Shane Richardson



Cousin Chucho sketch by Jorge R. Gutierrez *(left)* and ortho front view by Shane Richardson *(right)*

Adelita and Scardelita design by Sandra Equihua, paint by Gerald de Jesus

Adelita painting by Jorge R. Gutierrez. These two tough Sanchez girls started out as bandits in Chakal's army. But since the female soldiers of the Mexican Revolution are such a respected part of Mexican history, we changed them to be the bad-girl skeleton cousins of Manolo.

Painting by Paul Sullivan

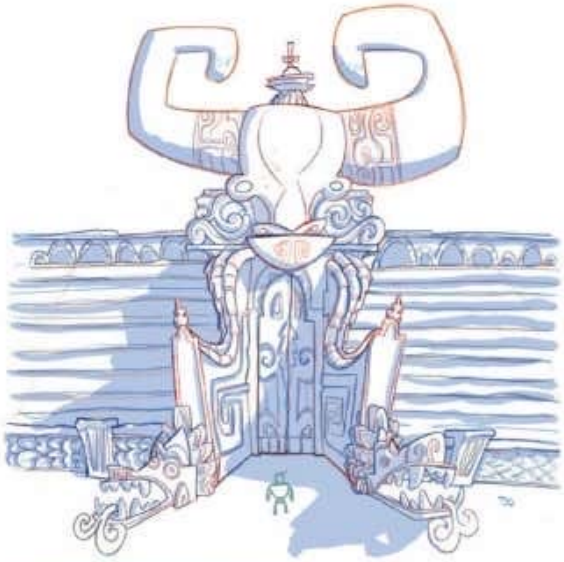
SANCHEZ FAMILY PARADE

This is where Manolo meets his ancestors and his mother, Carmen. This incredible reunion had to be staged in a very special place in an already amazing location. The final float looks like Carmen's skirt to reflect how young Manolo always saw his mother.

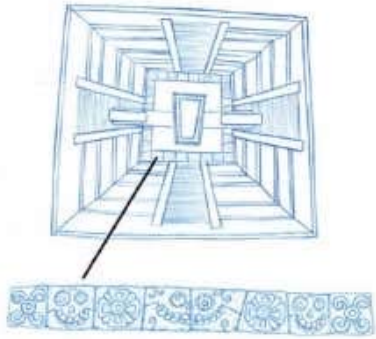
Parade lighting key by Yashar Tahtelkassai and Paul Sullivan

We designed all the floats together so we could make the story flow from one to the next. Each float is themed to its respective ancestor and harmonized by the folk art designs painted on the outside.

Float designs by Miguel Gonzalez and Tad Polson, paint by Sarah Marino



Luis Sanchez float door design by Tad Polson



Carmelo float design by
Miguel Gonzalez

Carmelo float lighting key by Paul Sullivan

Skeleton Aztec women by Sandra Equihua, texture by Sarah Marino, skeleton General Posada by Jorge R. Gutierrez.
In an earlier draft of the story, General Posada passed away while fighting Chakal, so I designed his skeleton version. Thankfully for Maria, he survived the battle and we didn't have to use this design.

Land of the Remembered characters by Sandra Equihua

Land of the Remembered citizens by Jorge R. Gutierrez

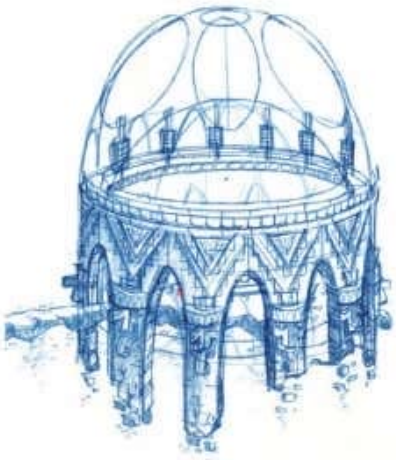
I really wanted the Land of the Remembered to be populated with people of all times, social classes, and ages living in harmony. And by having skeleton animals everywhere, we wanted to push the idea that in this realm mankind and animals are together.

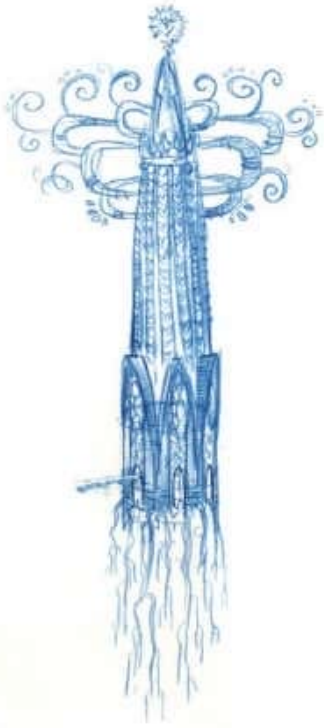
Skeleton animals by
Sandra Equihua and Megan Petasky

Lighting key painting by Bryan Lashelle

La Muerte castle design by Paul Sullivan

The interior of La Muerte's castle was designed to be a mixture of soft, round shapes, flowers, and hearts. It was mostly influenced by art nouveau, the art of Gustav Klimt, and the architecture of Antoni Gaudí. The overall design was meant to look like a castle version of the Mexican tree of life. A lot of the elements of the interior mirror the design of the exterior.





La Muerte castle door designs by Frederick Gardner, final door design by Jordan Lamarre-Wan

La Muerte's castle painting and design by Paul Sullivan

MOUNTAIN OF SOULS

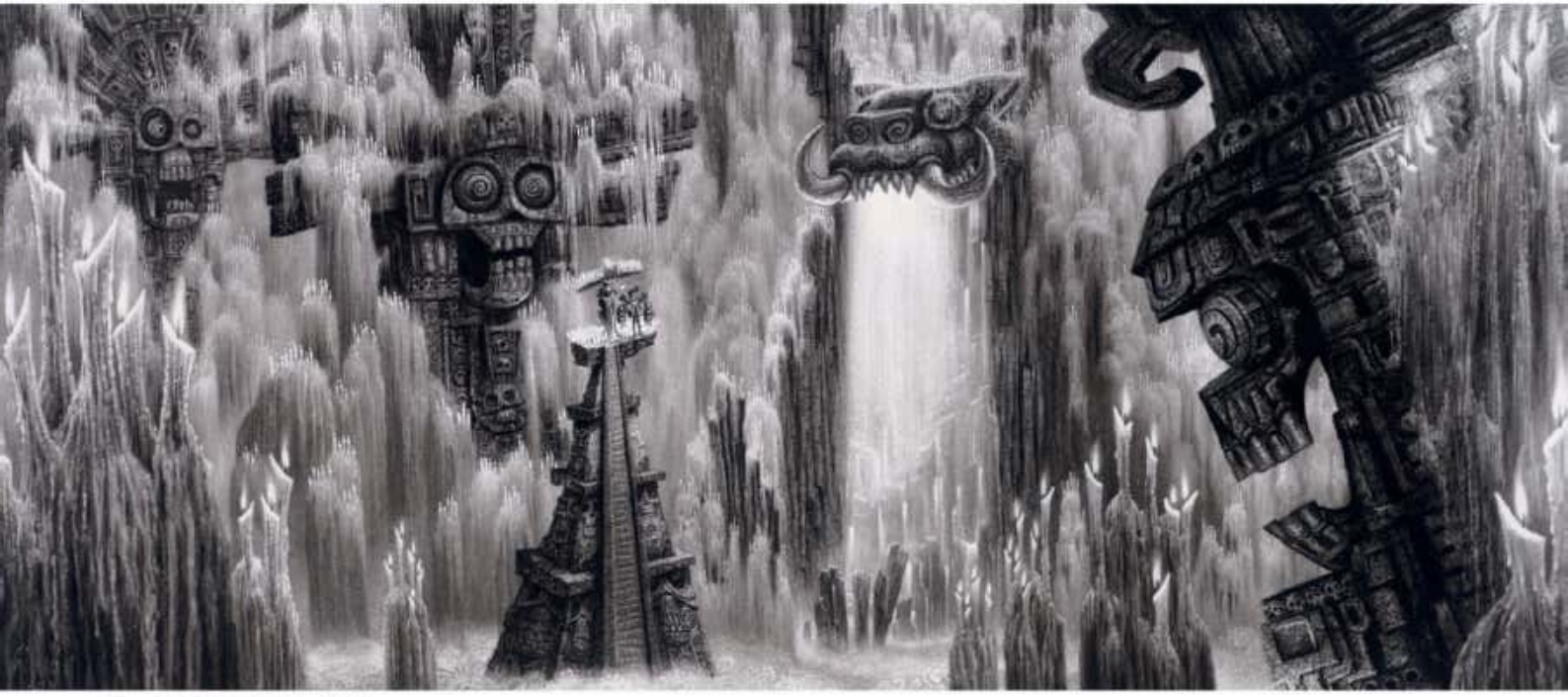
The design of this mountain is based on a statue of Coatlicue, an Aztec goddess of passing and rebirth. When I was a kid my parents took me to the Mexico City museum of anthropology, and that giant statue made a really big impression on me. I have always loved that sculpture, especially the serpent skirt.

Lighting key by Elise Hathaway and Yashar Tahtalkassai

Giant skeleton monster design by Clayton Stillwell

Mountain of Souls by Clayton Stillwell

The Cave Guardian is atop the Mountain of Souls, and its mouth is the entrance to the Cave of Souls. An ancient judge of the heart of man, the Cave Guardian is one of the tests Manolo must pass in order to return to the Land of the Living.



Cave of Souls design by Simon Varela

Lighting key by Yashar Tahmasbassai

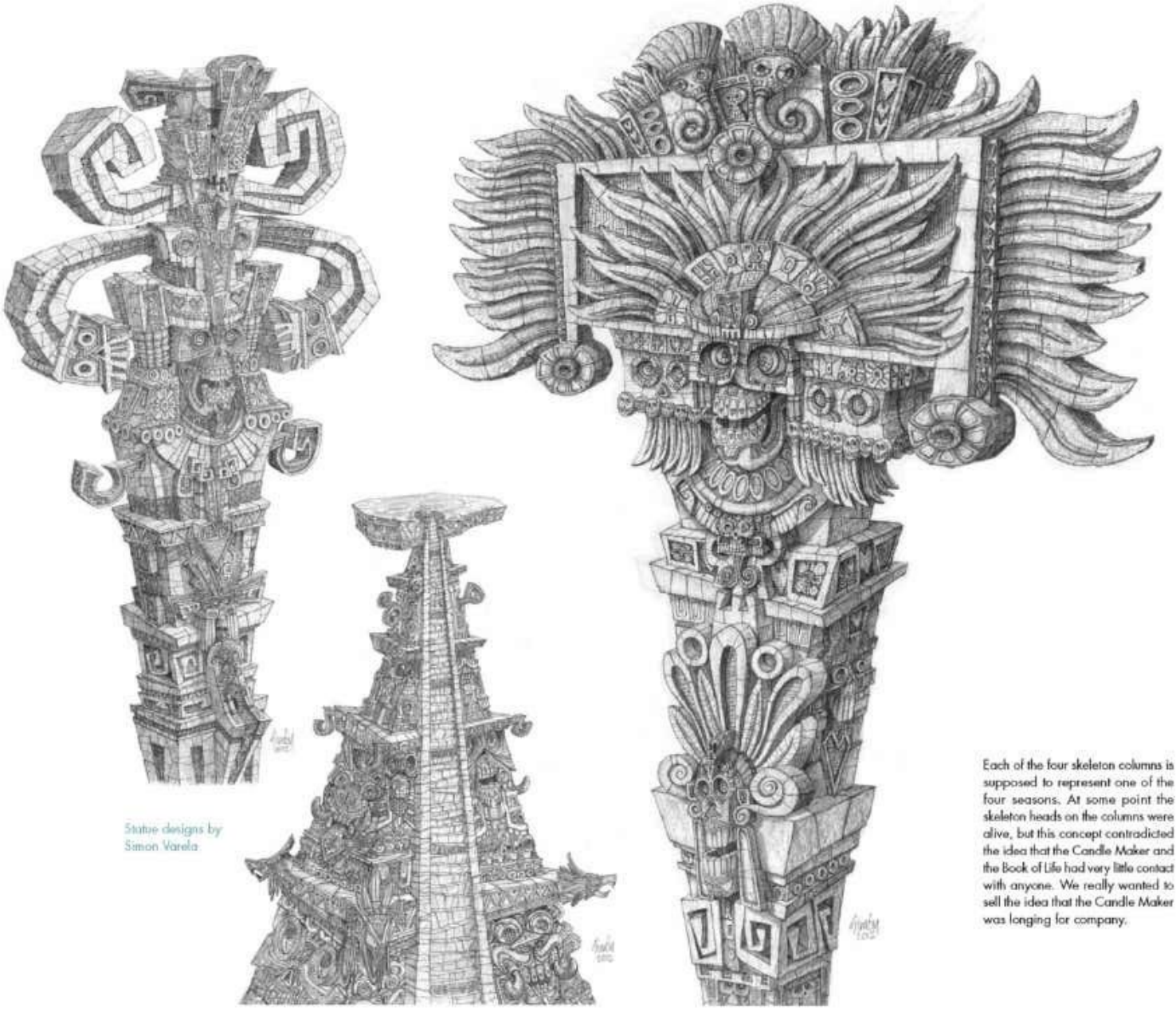
CAVE OF SOULS

The magical home of the Candle Maker and the Book of Life is a portal between all the lands in the universe. With magic waterfalls everywhere, this endless cave holds the souls of every man, woman, and child. As each person is born, a new candle is lit by the Candle Maker, which burns throughout their lifetime. As the person grows, the candle melts until their time on earth ends.

Lighting keys by Paul Sullivan. The cave is filled with candles that have been here since the beginning of time. We created mounds of candles with a ton of wax running down. The colors change from a dark yellow-orange to light white wax to represent how long this place has been around.

Cave of Souls platform designs by Simon Varela. During production we established that this world would have an equal balance of the square, circle, and triangle shapes that show up in our other worlds.

Cave of Souls painting by Paul Sullivan



Statue designs by Simon Varela

Each of the four skeleton columns is supposed to represent one of the four seasons. At some point the skeleton heads on the columns were alive, but this concept contradicted the idea that the Candle Maker and the Book of Life had very little contact with anyone. We really wanted to sell the idea that the Candle Maker was longing for company.

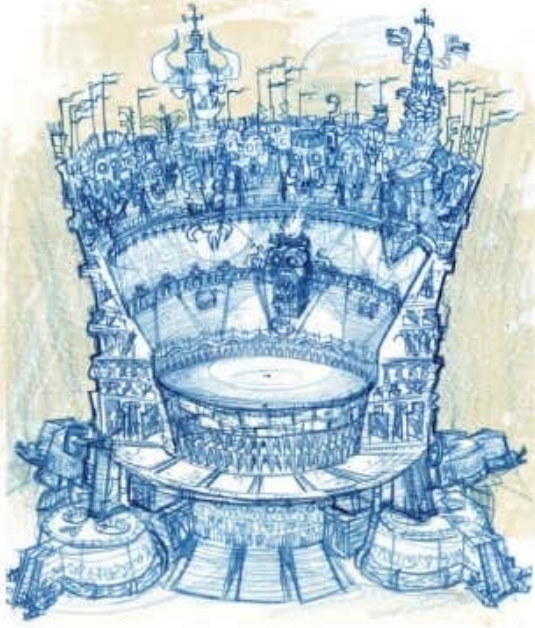
Top of bullring relics design by Frederick Gardner, paint by Elise Hatheway

The top of the arena is bordered with very colorful ancient stone skulls, bulls, and serpents. The eyes and mouths are balconies for people to look out of. The design symbolizes that not only was mankind judging Manolo, but all of animal kind as well.

BULLRING

PAUL SULLIVAN: **Jorge wanted the bullring in the Land of the Remembered to be massive! It's supposed to be the very first bullring in existence. He asked that we reference ancient Roman coliseums, then make them three times larger. We had to size the wall much larger to fit the scale of the giant Toro Muerto.**

Lighting keys by Elise Hatheway



Land of the Remembered bullring design by Frederick Gardner

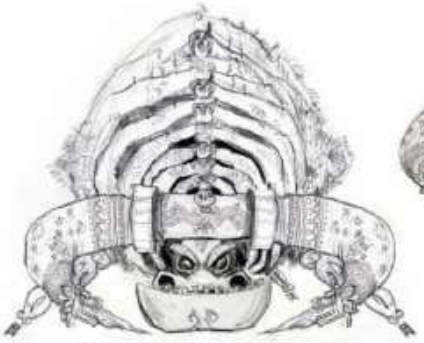
Paul Sullivan: If you look closely at the door's design, you'll see the serpent heads facing each other come together to make a bull's face, the actual door being his nose ring.

Bullring lighting key paintings by Paul Sullivan. In this shot of the arena we darkened the walls to really focus the eye on the center of the ring. You can see the arena with the ring of fire on pages 172–173.

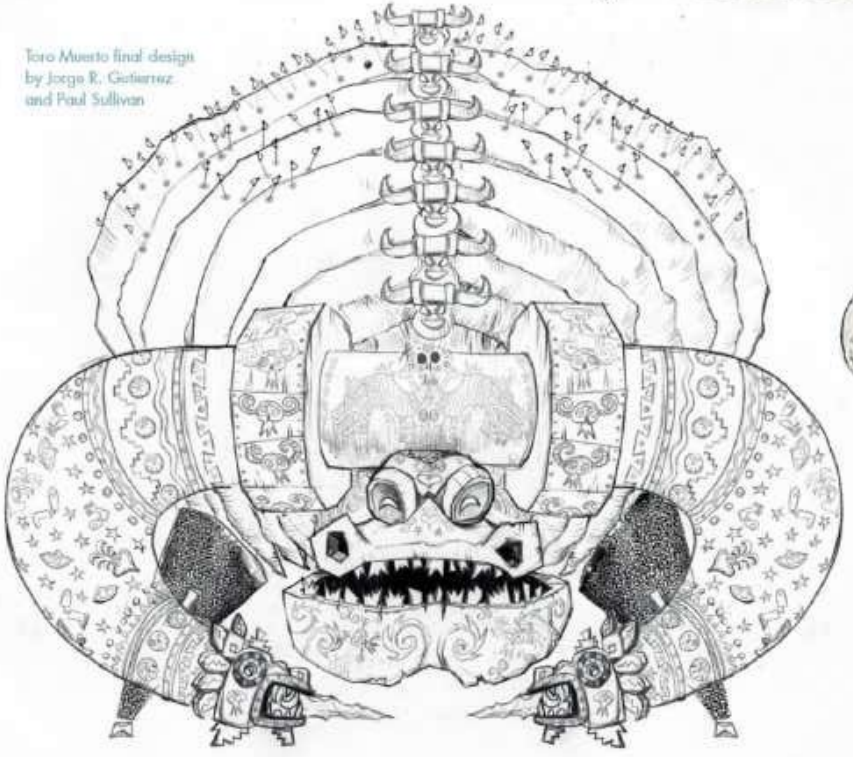
TORO MUERTO

Perhaps the most important, symbolic, and magical creature in the film, Toro Muerto is created out of the skeletons of all the bulls the Sanchez ancestors have defeated in the bullring over all of their collective lifetimes. This is one of those ideas and designs that I have had in my head since I was a kid.

Toro Muerto bull designs by Paul Sullivan



Toro Muerto final design by Jorge R. Gutierrez and Paul Sullivan



Paul Sullivan: When Jorge told me how Toro Muerto was created, I thought it really needed other elements to help with the scale. He's mostly made of stone bones; his ribs are made from thousands of ribs, and his legs are made from thousands of leg bones.

Aside from the white bones that would make up most of his big form, I wanted his massive horns to be made out of black obsidian and covered in gold *milagro* medals representing all the bullfighters the bull had taken in battle.

Toro Muerto first design by Jorge R. Gutierrez

Toro Muerto painting by Paul Sullivan, layout by Simon Varela

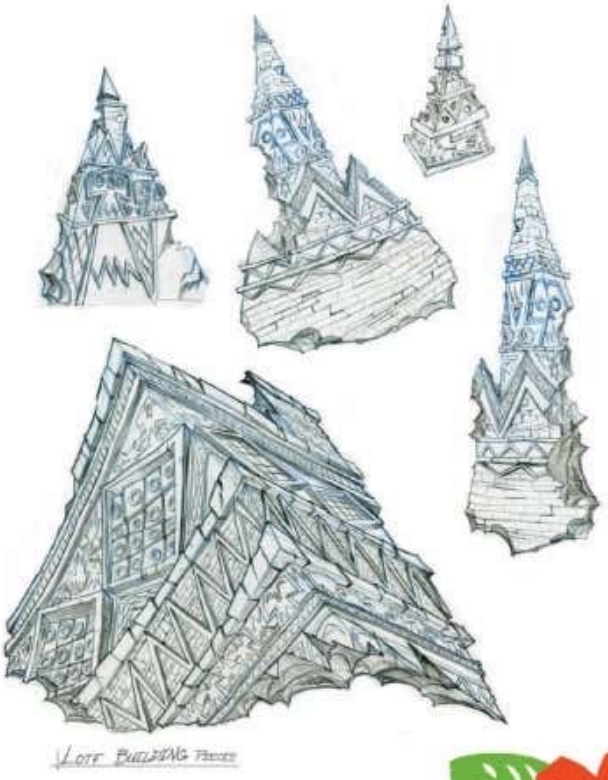
Xibalba's castle by Jorge R. Gutierrez and Harold Pendergast. I sketched the two-headed serpent castle after I finished Xibalba's character design. The gothy guy's inspiration was still living in my head.

Xibalba's castle rough sketches by Paul Sullivan. Xibalba's castle is shaped like a massive dagger stabbing into the ground and surrounded by huge chains; some links are the size of skyscrapers. Made of charcoal and obsidian, everything is just a bit off kilter and sharp. The two-headed serpent is twisting around itself, and the body is going into one of the mouths.

PART III LAND OF THE FORGOTTEN

We designed these pieces to make up a lot of the surrounding eroded architecture in this world. They have carved relief sculptures on the sides, balanced with curved, sharp, obsidian-like erosion at the bottoms.

Xibalba's castle line drawing by Paul Sullivan



XIBALBA'S CASTLE

I wanted Xibalba's home to be a huge collection of symbols revealing different things about its owner. A two-headed snake to reflect his personality. A snake eating itself to symbolize how he's his own worst enemy. And finally, a dagger stabbing the ground to symbolize how he had broken La Muerte's trust. And let's not forget the green flames of envy everywhere.

Shape study by Paul Sullivan

For the style guide, some basic exploration was done to show this world as a bleak wasteland.

Waterfall design by Clayton Stillwell

Xibalba's throne room design by Clayton Stillwell, surfacing paint by Travis Koller

Color key paint by Paul Sullivan

XIBALBA'S THRONE ROOM

This majestic and dark throne room is inside one of the castle serpent's mouths. When Manolo finally finds La Muerte, she is standing at the edge of the mouth contemplating the empty sadness that is the Land of the Forgotten.

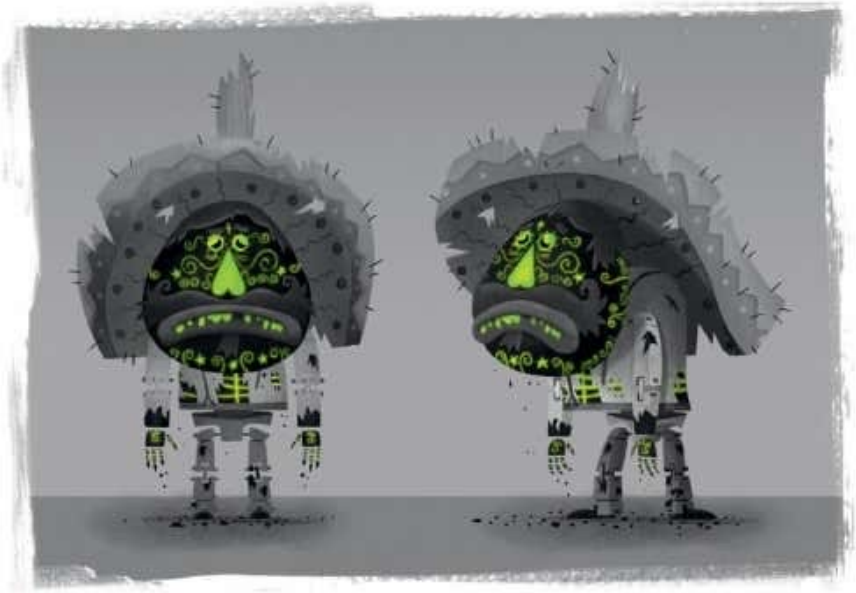
Xibalba's castle final design by Paul Sullivan

Run cycle study by Clayton Stillwell

THE FORGOTTEN

The Forgotten began as monsters that had literally forgotten their humanity. This concept was too dark, and so I took a different approach. They ended up being really sad and regretful skeletons that wished they had done something better with their lives.

Early Forgotten designs by Jorge R. Gutierrez



The Forgotten by Dustin d'Arnault

The black and green colors for the Forgotten come from Xibalba. I really wanted to make their heads hang down to sell the idea that they were defeated and had given up. Their clothes were gray to imply that they had even forgotten what color was like. At one point we had Manolo and his family slowly turn into the Forgotten while they traveled through the Land of the Forgotten. This made things too complicated, and that idea was eventually, you guessed it, forgotten.

The Forgotten lineup by Jorge R. Gutierrez and Dustin d'Arnault

The Forgotten Manolo by Paul Sullivan

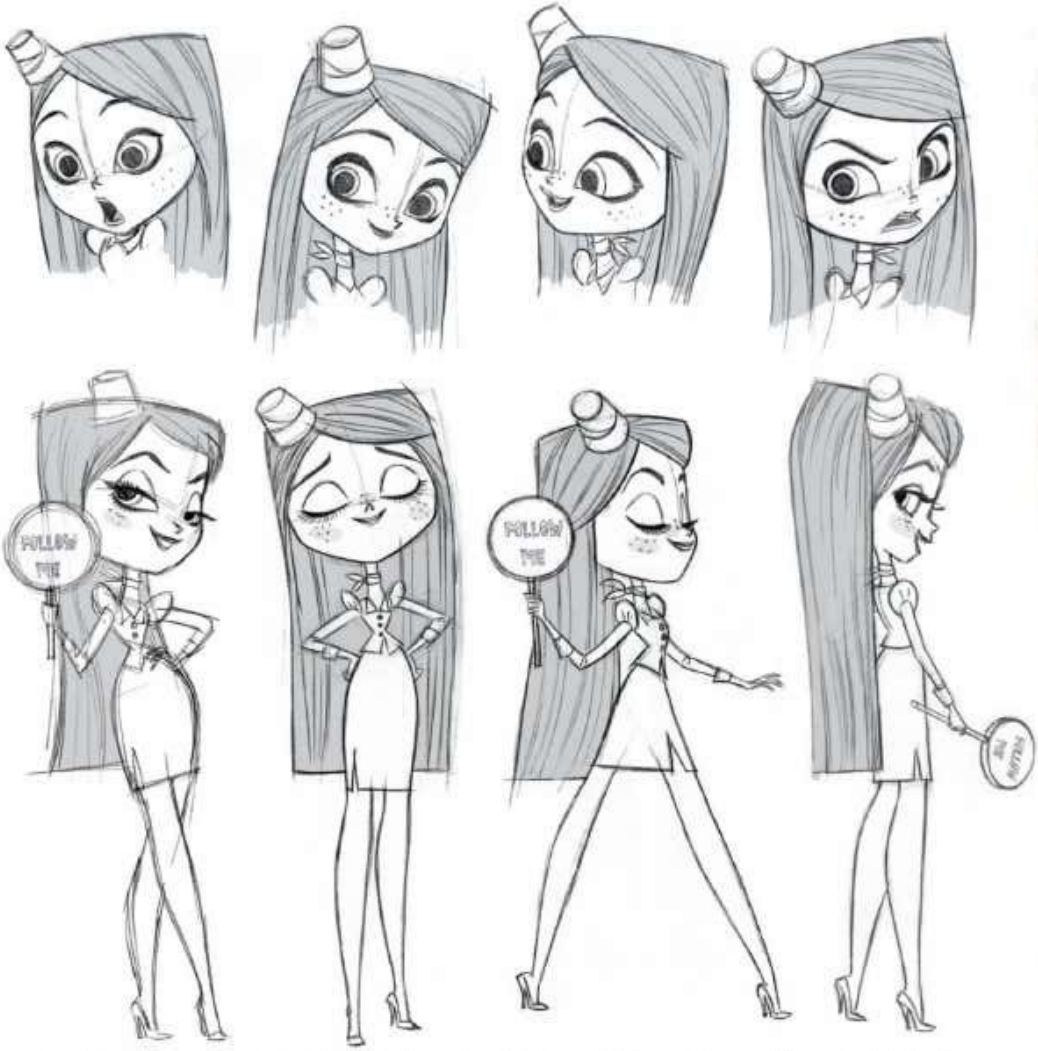
Land of the Forgotten travel sequence designs by Clayton Stillwell. Once we'd established the look of the location, we tried to stick pretty close to the action of the story reels and expand on the design. However, these scenes are not included in the film.

The Land of the Forgotten design by Clayton Stillwell, paint by Travis Koller

Museum intro and outro lighting key paintings by Paul Sullivan. The museum needed to look pretty basic and simple so that when we traveled into our magical worlds there would be a stark contrast. To keep it in the same style of our film, we still exaggerated the shapes of the characters and the school bus. Colorwise, it's very cold and gray in the beginning because we needed a clear palette, and in the end of the film we brought the colors from the magical worlds into the museum world.

Museum design by Brian Rich, painting by Shane Richardson and Sarah Marino

PART IV THE MUSEUM



Mary Beth acting poses by Carlos Luzzi. I asked Sandra to design Mary Beth to feel like an all-American flight attendant from the sixties, since she was about to take the school kids on a magical journey to sunny Mexico. A person with red hair and blue eyes has the most rare coloring in the world. We employed that combination to subtly illustrate Mary Beth's uniqueness.

Mary Beth design by Sandra Equihua, texture paint by Sarah Marino

Sandra and I had a blast designing the kids. She did all the hard work, and I would just suggest really weird ideas. Each of the kids is inspired by a different part of the world. Sanjay is Indian American. Goth kid is Mexican American. Sasha is Russian American. Jane is Chinese American. Joao is Brazilian American.

Museum kids designs by Sandra Equihua and Jorge R. Gutierrez, texture paint by Sarah Marino

Museum lighting keys by Yashar Tahtalkassai, Elise Hatheway, and Paul Sullivan. If you look closely, the secret room is full of characters, props, and sets from our story. This was done to gently introduce the visual language of the magical worlds.

Tree of Life mural design by Frederick Gardner, Travis Koller, Elise Hatheway, Roman Laney, Dustin d'Arnault, Yashar Tahtelkassai, Sandra Equihua, Paul Sullivan, and Jorge R. Gutierrez. Almost everyone on the art team touched this design at one point or another! A lot of thought went into the design of this baby. So it's very appropriate to finish the book with it. Dripping with symbolism, this mural was a real challenge. If you look closely, you can see my self-portrait to the right of the Candle Maker. Sandra and our son Luka are on the opposite side. I will always love this piece.

Illustration by Paul Sullivan

AFTERWORD

by PAUL SULLIVAN

FIVE YEARS AGO, a small group of artists started on the journey of creating *The Book of Life*. For our director, Jorge Gutierrez, the film began long before that as a story that borrowed from all aspects of his life since his childhood. During our journey, we were faced with many challenges and obstacles. But these challenges forced us to be innovative and seamless in our setup and execution. We were all put to the test every day, while feeling the personal pressure to create the unique vision and level of quality *The Book of Life* deserved. But it takes pressure to make a diamond. We used this to our advantage, trusting our instincts and following our hearts just like our hero Manolo.

My experience working with Jorge has been a dream come true. Since day one we hit it off personally and artistically, bouncing ideas off each other as if we had been working together for years. It was like the planets aligned and it was meant to be. I had been searching for an opportunity to work not only on something visually compelling, but also with a team that shared my artistic values and aesthetics.

At an early stage, the team was small but strong and efficient. Jorge is an amazing storyteller and designer whose artistic sensibilities are based on strong storytelling, visually reinforced by graphic shapes and symbolism. His imagination is boundless, and he really pushed the envelope of creativity. Sometimes his ideas seemed impossible, but I was determined to make them work! The result is something that neither one of us would have created on our own. I am very thankful for the collaborative balance we had. Both Simon Varela and Sandra Equihua contributed amazing designs, each offering a unique strength. Sandra specializes in character design and Simon in environment design. Together we balanced and challenged each other artistically. I was fortunate enough to be involved with every aspect of the creation of the film's look, from development design to surfacing, color script, lighting, functionality, and keeping it all cohesive and consistent along the way. The goal was to make our film feel unique and handcrafted, to accurately reflect the craftsmanship of Mexican folk art and give it a sense of charm, and to create new worlds with their own unique designs and color languages, so they are different from one another, yet connected by elements that link the worlds and characters together.

After we went to Reel FX for the production, I was very lucky to have a group of talented artists to work with on *The Book of Life*. They all really embraced the artistic and technical challenges of our film. If it had not been for their trust in our vision and ideas, and their patience and dedication to our meticulous design style, we could not have achieved what we did. A huge thank-you to all that contributed to the art on this film. The team really took a lesson from the film to "always play from the heart," so to speak. We poured our hearts into the look of this film, and I hope it shows. This has been a gem of a project to work on, and it will always hold a special place in my heart. Without the personal connection that we all developed, this film would not have turned out as amazing and unique as it has. This book represents all of the passion and talent of the team involved in the creation of the film. I truly feel that we have created something special together and I am very excited to finally share it with the world!

PSULLIVAN

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

On behalf of Guillermo del Toro, Reel FX Animation Studios, and 20th Century Fox, I would love to thank all the amazing artists and production personnel in *The Book of Life*'s art department. Without them, this book would be more like a takeout menu. Their hard work and dedication to the film will never be forgotten!

—JORGE R. GUTIERREZ

We would like to thank all of the amazing people that contributed their talents to *The Book of Life*'s production.

SPECIAL THANKS TO

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Shane Richardson
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Allen Tam
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Tod Polson
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Roman Laney
Carlos Luzzi
Bryan Lashelle
Travis Koller
Francesca Natale
Jesse Aclin
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Craig Elliott
Gerald de Jesus
Andy Bialk
Tom Caufield

PRODUCTION / MARKETING

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Jasmine Johnson
Larry Clem
David Mouser
Megan Petasky
Saxton Washburn
Geoffrey Stott
Matthew Teevan
Katherine Harper
Tiffany Kieran

The Book of Life

FOREWORD BY GUILLERMO DEL TORO

A TALE PACKED WITH ADVENTURE, *The Book of Life* celebrates the power of family and friendship, and the courage to follow your dreams.

To determine whether the heart of humankind is pure and good, two godlike beings engage in an otherworldly wager during Mexico's annual Day of the Dead celebration. They tether two friends, Manolo and Joaquin, into vying for the heart of the beautiful and fiercely independent Maria, with comical and sometimes dangerous consequences.

The Art of The Book of Life *is an inspirational behind-the-scenes look at the development of the animated feature from Twentieth Century Fox and Reel FX and includes commentary from the makers of the film, including writer/director Jorge R. Gutierrez (*El Tigre: The Adventures of Manny Rivera*).*

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